

Belle Harris Bennett

*HER LIFE WORK*

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MRS. R. W. MACDONELL



Presented by

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# BELLE HARRIS BENNETT

## *Her Life Work*

By

MRS. R. W. MACDONELL

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*"Rejoice that man is hurled  
From change to change unceasingly,  
His soul's wings never furled."*



BOARD OF MISSIONS  
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE  
1928

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In order to place the life story of Belle Harris Bennett within the reach of all, this book has been subsidized by the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. For this reason the sale price is one-third less than is usual with books of this character.





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BELLE HARRIS BENNETT, LL.D.

FOUNDER OF SCARRITT BIBLE AND TRAINING SCHOOL, 1889; PRESIDENT OF WOMAN'S  
BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS, 1896-1910; PRESIDENT OF WOMAN'S  
MISSIONARY COUNCIL, 1910-1922

**To**

**THE WOMEN**

**OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH  
WHOSE COURAGE TO FOLLOW THE GLEAM OF  
MISS BENNETT'S VISION  
MADE POSSIBLE HER GREAT ACHIEVEMENT**



BELLE H. BENNETT  
OF THE ORDER OF SAINTS COURAGEOUS

THOU seest now the Father's face unveiled,  
The quest of thy long years of service true.  
It was a lonely quest sometimes for thy  
Brave feet, with something of the loneliness  
Of God, who misses from his comradeship  
Those human children dear to his high call.

Unseeking thou for place or power, as thou  
Didst others meet along life's way, thy thought  
Found utterance thus: "O fellow travelers,  
Know ye the Father? Come and let us seek  
His face together and his purpose learn  
Concerning you and me, and all those lost  
From his high company through ignorance  
And sin. He seeks them. And he uses us  
To help him find and bring them home again.  
Lo! here the feet of the Good Shepherd trod.  
Look close, and you will find the way blood-stained;  
Let's follow quick, our joy to share his pain,  
The pain that all earth's hurts at last will heal.  
See! Yonder on the heights gleams forth his cross,  
And if we follow steady it will light  
Us all the darksome paths where bruised sheep  
And trembling little lambs await our tender hands  
Come, friends! O let the Master not miss us  
As comrades strong and true in love's long quest."  
O wise of head, but wiser still of heart,  
Thy love shall bring thee goodly company  
In many won to God from many lands.

Dear Saint Courageous, Lady Great-Heart, friend  
Of countless hearts because true friend of God,  
When thy strong soul wore through its imprisoning clay  
And fared it forth into those spaces vast  
Uncharted yet by us who know but time,  
We who love thee, were not wholly left  
Behind in numbing loneliness of grief.  
Somehow we, too, seem strangely borne afar  
Out toward those western seas where tides of time  
Ebb not, but break upon eternal shores.  
We hear the mystic music of those tides  
Which bore thee homeward to the shores of God,  
And pain and death and loss seem passing dreams,  
O Life! O Love! Ye *are* forevermore.

EMILY ALLEN SILER.

Lake Junaluska, N. C.

## PREFACE

THE history of the evangelistic movement of the eighteenth century, which gave birth to Methodism, carries life stories of certain elect women whose consecration, service, and social graces rendered large contribution to that great cause. It was a sacred obligation of the eighteenth century Church to preserve the histories of Hester Ann Rogers, Lady Huntington, and others of those noble women. The Church of the twentieth century has no less an obligation to perpetuate the memory of the life and service of Dr. Belle Harris Bennett, the greatest woman Southern Methodism has produced. Her name ought to be registered with those worthies of the eighteenth century evangelistic movement because of her spiritual power and achievements. To her as to them was granted the privilege of opening up new worlds of life and service to others, and like them she surrendered comfort and pleasure for the work.

This biography of Miss Bennett has been written at the request of the Woman's Missionary Council, the group of women whom she led in Christian service for more than a third of a century. Barrett Wendell is quoted as having said: "The first and perhaps only duty of an honest biographer is, so far as may be, to set forth the man of whom he writes as that man saw himself and explain him in his own terms. Then judgment may best be left to those who read." It has not been difficult to follow this rule in writing the life story of Dr. Belle Harris Bennett, for she definitely saw herself God's chosen vessel for specific service, and her life was expressed in terms of obedience to that vision. The intrinsic value of such a life to the world, simply and sympathetically put into words, cannot fail to carry a message. It has been my earnest desire so to por-

tray her life through the pages of this book that those who read may receive the message and be won to love and serve and glorify God as she did. The task has been a labor of love.

To Miss Estelle Haskin, Secretary of Literature of the Council, I am greatly indebted for clippings collected immediately after Miss Bennett's death. To Miss Emily Olmstead, her beloved deaconess and secretary, I am under great obligation for very personal paragraphs taken from her brochure, "Intimate Glimpses." The kindly courtesy of the officials in the library of the Daughters of the American Revolution has made possible much data concerning Miss Bennett's Colonial and Revolutionary ancestors; and the generosity of her many friends in lending correspondence has added greatly to the value of the book. The sympathetic coöperation of Miss Bennett's brother and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Waller Bennett, of Richmond, Ky., has given encouragement and inspiration in making this biography a true story of a great life.      MRS. R. W. MACDONELL.

Washington, D. C.

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## FOREWORD

To portray a great personality, self-revealing, self-interpreting in life's manifold, complex relations and experiences, is a great task. Only one can undertake it who is used to the mountain air of high thought, sacrificial toil, and quenchless aspiration.

Besides this kinship of experience, in order to insure a vivid portraiture, the biographer must have that reverent love for the one portrayed which is only deepened when noble souls come into closest intimacy. Those indifferent or unfriendly to us have no key to unlock our personality. Only as we are loved are we understood.

Dr. Pinson's biography of Bishop Lambuth grew out of a royal friendship between two great spirits passionately Godward-bent. St. Francis of Assisi, at the distance of centuries, so draws late biographers into love of him that they make him near and dear to us. "Margaret Ogilvie," the most exquisite gem in English biographical literature, is a costly pearl from the deep sea of Barrie's rare, understanding filial love.

The supreme biographers of all time, who, each in his own way, portrayed Jesus of Nazareth, the Good News of heaven and earth, wrote from a compelling love moved upon by the Spirit of God. To Matthew's publican ears the love of clinking coin was forever lost in the sweet imperative of Christ's "Follow me" that reached and captured his inmost soul. The "young man" Mark was himself a witness of some scenes in the swiftly moving drama of the Saviour's passion. In the years following his own spiritual "come back" after Paul's hot rejection of him, he had his sensitive mind and heart reclaimed by the patient sympathy of his great-hearted kinsman, Barnabas, and wrote

under the illumination of Peter's burning, repentant love. Luke doubtless through days and nights of comradeship with St. Paul was swept into the one passion of the Great Apostle, "Jesus and him crucified." Or, perhaps, Luke may himself have been one of those truth-seeking Greeks who came to Philip during Passion Week with the plea: "Sir, we would see Jesus." If Luke did then see and hear, he also loved. His power of imagination and pen could visualize into what Renan called "the most beautiful book in the world," all he could hear or read of Love Incarnate.

But the peerless biography of our Lord came from him, who, on the night before crucifixion, heard the very heartbeats of the Master—John the Divine who,

"With reverent pen, dipped deep into the crimson tide  
Of Christ's own understanding, sacrificial love.

John dared to stand upon the utmost rim of thought  
And glimpse the far horizons of the Word made flesh."

Only the searchlight of highest love can reach the heights and depths of human personality. My friend, Mrs. MacDonell, has every qualification I have named for writing Miss Bennett's biography; this unsought task, the climax of her service for the Church.

When in 1892 Miss Bennett came to take the place of her gifted sister, Miss Sue Bennett, in the Central Committee, the small governing body of the Woman's Parsonage and Home Mission Society, she came from the Garden of Sorrows in whose shadows she had found the serenity of a great peace. It is beautiful to recall the warm atmosphere of love and needed fellowship in which she moved naturally to her place of leadership in that circle of wide-hearted Kentucky women to whom she had long been dear, and newer friends won by her heroic work for the Training School.

In that lonely group of women praying and working for

a fully awakened Church wherein every child of God should be free to give glad service to his world, there could be no small misunderstandings or rivalries. We were too busy talking with God and heartening one another for the upward struggle against public indifference and amazing opposition from some of the best and brainiest people in the Church.

Mrs. Nathan Scarritt from our ranks, afterwards Mrs. R. K. Hargrove, following Miss Helm as General Secretary, gave brilliant and indefatigable leadership in realizing the dreams of Miss Helm and her coworkers in making the Homeland Christian for the sake of all lands. When Miss Helm's brave spirit left her frail body for God's better country, by her request her blessed sister, Miss Mary, came after a year's waiting for health to take her place as editor of *Our Homes*. Here was another strong tie between the foreign and the home work.

The Helm sisters belonged to that rare Order of Saints of the Sound Head and Merry Heart. Often the keen sense of humor prevailing in that pioneer group prevented any one of them from becoming a somber saint or from finding, with Elijah, a juniper tree under which to take counsel with one's own discouraged soul and to be called to account by Him who "shall not fail nor be discouraged until he has set judgment in the earth." How musical is the memory of Miss Bennett's clear, ringing laughter when there came the victory of seeing "the funny side" even of prejudice and unreasoning obstinacy!

Into this warm, cheery atmosphere Mrs. MacDonell was brought as General Secretary in 1900. I have always been strongly persuaded that God graciously guided when others sought by Miss Helm and by Mrs. Hargrove to take their places declined because already doing God-appointed tasks. By unanimous and enthusiastic choice Mrs. MacDonell was called to enter this open door. I am sure that Miss Bennett and the new General Secretary had, in the

comradeship, prayerful understanding love of this small group, a preparation for the coming decades of enlarging growth, with sometimes necessarily painful adjustments to changing conditions and fast-coming world upheavals.

No other woman could more wisely, lovingly help to hasten in the mind and heart of the Church that attitude toward the union of the missionary forces for which many had always longed and prayed and labored. With that "infinite capacity for taking pains" which Carlyle defines as "genius," a pen skilled in expression, a mind and heart keenly sensitive to beauty and truth, a spirit wedded to righteousness and disciplined into tenderness by life's mingled experiences, rich in motherhood, Mrs. MacDonell entered upon almost two decades of official service. In these heroic years she and Miss Bennett as closest friends and coworkers endured hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. But they were ever conscious of a great comradeship with thousands of faithful women, many of them gifted and well known, and many unknown except by God and their own obscure circles.

Many biographies of Miss Bennett might be written, for many loved her greatly and understandingly. The riches of friendship given out of her great mind and heart were poured back into her own life in "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over."

Surely the pulse of the whole Church will be quickened as this life story of Miss Bennett goes forth in the beginning of the jubilee year of Southern Methodist womanhood. It is opportune for the Church to which she gave the clear-seeing devotion of a true pioneer; opportune for the world which she loved and served with no horizon line but man's need and God's will; opportune for the wide circle of friends to whom she gave herself in understanding comradeship of service for the King; opportune for the smaller intimate group who thank God for her royal life and love.

It was eminently fitting that Mrs. MacDonell was chosen for the high service of giving Miss Bennett again to her own and to future generations. For like Elizabeth Fry, Frances Willard, Laura Haygood, Isabella Thoburn, Jane Addams, and scores of other resolute souls who have sought only to know and do the will of God in utter self-forgetting Belle H. Bennett became one of those world grains of wheat which fall into the ground and die into an immortality of harvest.

The motherhood of the Church prays that the call of Miss Bennett's life may reach the world's young womanhood everywhere eager for fullness of life. With her, we sing with Tennyson again:

"The path of Duty was the way to glory.  
He that ever following her commands  
On with toil of heart and knees and hands  
Through the long gorge to the far light has won  
His path upward and prevailed,  
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled  
Are close upon the shining table-lands  
To which our God himself is moon and sun."

MRS. FRANK SILER.

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N. C.



# BELLE HARRIS BENNETT

## HER LIFE WORK

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### CHAPTER I

#### ANCESTRY AND HOME ENVIRONMENT

SIX miles from Richmond, Ky., on the highway to Lexington, in the heart of the beautiful rolling blue-grass country, is the small township of Whitehall. Before the Civil War Whitehall was the center of the handsome country estates of a group of leading Kentuckians who gave social luster to the section and prominence to the State in national and international affairs. There were the Bennetts, who had lived on the homestead Homelands, or near by in Madison County, since the early settlement of Kentucky. Hard by was the handsome estate of Gen. Cassius M. Clay, who was famous for service in the Mexican War and as Minister to the Court of Russia during the administration of President Lincoln. Other prominent families, with large landed estates, contributed to the wealth and social life of this select vicinity.

In this community, at Homelands, the beautiful residence of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Bennett, on December 3, 1852, was born their second daughter, Isabel Harris Bennett. Here, in this environment of culture and luxury, Belle Bennett, as she was familiarly called, passed her lovely girlhood and grew to maturity. She was one of eight children born and reared to manhood and womanhood in this family. These

were William, the eldest, who became a large planter and financier; Hon. John Bennett, for many years an able lawyer at the Kentucky bar and member of the State Senate of Kentucky; James Bennett, graduate of Centre College, large landholder, farmer, and financier; Dr. David, physician and banker; Sue, older by ten years than Belle; Waller and Samuel, Jr., graduates of Yale, bankers and brokers and landowners. All of these Bennett brothers were gentlemen of high character and culture. They commanded honor and high regard in the commonwealth of Kentucky notwithstanding the fact that their professional and business careers were confined to Madison County, with the exception of one, whose home was located in Lexington, twenty miles north of that of his youth.

Mr. Samuel Bennett, father of this Kentucky Bennett family, was an eminently successful planter and financier. His high qualities of character and charm of manner classed him with that select group which the South honors as "gentlemen of the old school." His wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Chenault Bennett, was a woman of strong common sense and rare executive ability. The outstanding characteristics of both Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Bennett, in the memory of their children, were vigor of mind, courtliness of manner, and great consideration for the feelings and opinions of others.

The American house of Bennett, from which Belle Harris Bennett descended, had its beginning with the colonial history of the United States. John Bennett settled in Calvert County, Md., about 1660. His will, probated in 1700, devised a goodly estate to his three sons, John, Thomas, and John, for like many gentlemen of colonial days he left two sons possessing the same name. His second son, Thomass Bennett, settled in Anne Arundel County, Md., where he married Mary Walker. This marriage was blessed with ten children. The son to whom they gave his

name, Thomas, born in 1741, served three years in the Colonial War with Captain Deans' Company of the Fifth Maryland Regiment. This Revolutionary soldier, the second American Thomas Bennett, married Katherine Tevis, daughter of Robert Tevis, of Baltimore County, Md. His sister, Ann Bennett, married Robert Tevis, Jr. The founder of this American Tevis family came to this country as a poor French Protestant lad in the beginning of 1702 and by dint of energy and foresight acquired a handsome estate.

A fever of migration came upon the fourth generation of American Bennetts, for four sons of Thomas Bennett and one of Robert and Ann Bennett Tevis moved to Kentucky when statehood was young. Moses and John settled in Madison County, where John became a Methodist preacher, serving as "circuit rider." As small farmer and country tailor he supported himself, for he would never accept compensation for his ministry. The first Methodist Church in Madison County was called Bennett Chapel in his honor. It has long since been destroyed, but the building site is not two miles from Homelands. This Methodist preacher was held in such esteem in his day that he was called "Honest John Bennett."

From this Tevis-Bennett union lovers of the cause of education were given to the world. It was Miss Bennett's cousin, Rev. John Tevis, and his wife, Mrs. Julia A. Tevis, who established that highly accredited school, Science Hill, at Shelbyville, Ky., over which the Tevis family presided fifty-four years. Hard by, in the mountains of Southeastern Kentucky, at London, rises the Sue Bennett Memorial School because of this Bennett passion for making education possible for a backward people, while "Honest John's" nephew, Benjamin Franklin Bennett, reached out for the higher education of women through Goucher College in Baltimore, to which he contributed two substantial buildings, \$60,000, and twenty-five years of unsalaried service

as treasurer. The Scarritt College for Christian Workers, in Nashville, Tenn., the Woman's Christian Medical College, in Shanghai, China, and Bennett College, Brazil, are exponents of Miss Belle Bennett's belief in the power of education.

Turning from the line of ancestors through "Honest John Bennett" to the other side of "Honest John's" house, it is found that in May, 1611, the proud ship *Prosperous* sailed up the James River, bringing with other passengers "Capt. Thomas Harris, Gentleman," so styled in the records of the Virginia Company. This gentleman of the Virginia Colony was grandfather sixth removed of Belle H. Bennett. Whether he came to this "New World" because of the rumor that "all the dripping pans ran pure gold," or for the loftier motive of implanting Anglo-Saxon civilization, the records fail to tell. Ten years later, November, 1621, the Marmaduke brought Capt. Thomas Osborne and his family to Virginia. His fair young daughter, Adria, soon gained the affections of our doughty bachelor, Capt. Thomas Harris, now forty-eight years of age, who had escaped the charms of the one hundred young women sent by the London Company to Virginia to marry the brave pioneers. Notwithstanding the twenty-eight years' difference in their ages, he wooed and won Adria. The Harris home established by this union became a bulwark of the new country, "a seed plot of Christian civilization."

The colonists were mobilized for resistance of the unfriendly attacks of the Indians under Lieut. Col. Thomas Osborne, with Capt. Thomas Harris second in command. On the memorable March 22, 1622, when the thirty Indian nations assaulted the white people, these brave officers were among those who led their forces to successful defense. These valiant warriors were called also to governmental affairs in this new country. Captain Harris was twice elected by popular vote to represent Henrico County in the

House of Burgesses and Lieutenant Colonel Osborne served five years as Burgess for the same county.

To Captain Harris and Adria was born Maj. Robert Harris, who like his father and grandfather Osborne was an officer of the militia. Maj. Robert Harris' marriage with Mary (Claiborne) Rice, a young widow, daughter of Col. William Claiborne, the first Secretary of State of Virginia, united two of the first and bravest families of colonial days. Their son, William Harris, stands on record as a fore-runner of good roads builders, for colonial history registers his "petition for a road from his plantation on Green Creek to South River—that is, James on the lower side of Bellenger's Creek." It is an interesting fact to note here that one of Belle H. Bennett's hobbies was good-road building, particularly for such as furnished entrance to and egress from properties over which she had supervision. Young William Harris married Temperance Overton, whose first son, Robert, was born in 1685. This second Maj. Robert Harris, besides serving the militia, was Surveyor General of Louisa County. He married Mourning Glenn, a woman so remarkable for piety and lovable character that her children down through generations named a daughter Mourning Glenn in her honor.

The eldest of Major Robert and Mourning Glenn Harris' ten children was Christopher, who was great-grandfather of Miss Bennett. The American Revolution was brewing while Christopher Harris was growing to manhood. The eloquence of Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee so fired his patriotic spirit that he volunteered for Revolutionary service at the first call for men to carry on the battle for American independence. He and his brother, the third Capt. Robert Harris, rendered valiant service throughout the Colonial War. Christopher married beautiful Agness McCord on October 2, 1794, and to them was born a daughter, Isabel. Later they migrated to Madison County,

Ky., where they secured large land grants. Isabel grew into charming young womanhood in this rich flax-growing country and soon captivated and married the young planter and preacher "Honest John Bennett." This gracious Isabelle Harris Bennett became mother of Samuel Bennett, of Homelands, and it was through her the blood of these accumulated generations of pioneers, patriots, leaders, and statesmen were transfused into the living, pulsing heart of the second Isabelle Harris Bennett, longtime leader of Methodist women of the South. It was from this grandmother Miss Bennett got her name, which she revered because of its relation to those whose blood she was proud to claim. She always insisted upon insertion of the name Harris or the initial "H" whenever her name was written or appeared in print.

On her maternal side Miss Bennett's ancestors were French Huguenots. About 1730 the Chenaults came to the "New World," seeking freedom from religious persecution. In Albemarle County in 1749 William Chenault was born. This young French American was destined to play a large part in the struggle for American independence. He served in the Fifth Virginia Regiment of the Colonial Army, commanded by Col. Josiah Perkins, in Capt. Henry Tennell's Company. He was in the battle of Stillwater, in 1777, before the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga. Again he was in the battle of Brandywine, the first American battle in which the Marquis Lafayette participated. He spent the winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge, where perhaps the greatest hardships of the war of the Revolution were endured. He was in Washington's march in pursuit of the British in 1778 from Valley Forge through New Jersey to New York City after the evacuation of Philadelphia by the British. Before the war this hero of Revolutionary days had married Elizabeth Mullins, daughter of Mathew Mullins, who was also a soldier of the Continental Army. In

the fall of 1786 William Chenault immigrated to Madison County, Ky., and with his family settled on a farm purchased from Josiah Phelps.

There could be small wonder that William Chenault, Jr., the son and grandson of Revolutionary soldiers, should have been fired with zeal for service in this new country. He found a bride in Susannah Phelps, daughter of Josiah Phelps, whose father, Capt. John Phelps, had rendered distinguished service in the French and Indian Wars of 1753. He also had represented Bedford County in the Virginia House of Burgesses. Josiah Phelps himself was a spectacular figure in defense of Fort Boonesboro against the Indians in 1778. He was also one of the one hundred and eighty men in George Rogers Clark's daring campaign against the British and Indians in Kentucky and Ohio. His name appears on the petition to the Governor of Virginia to incorporate the city of Louisville, in 1779. When Kentucky became an independent State Josiah Phelps and his son-in-law, William Chenault, Jr., were elected to represent Madison County in the General Assembly of the State. Later the sons of William Chenault and his wife, Susannah Phelps Chenault, Waller and William, were members of the State Legislature; the latter, the third William, also served in the Constitutional Convention of Kentucky in 1849.

After the death of her husband, Susannah Phelps Chenault managed his estate so cleverly that she was reckoned the most remarkable woman of Madison County. It was their daughter, Elizabeth Chenault, who married Samuel Bennett on December 11, 1834. From her mother's farm, north of Richmond, young Bennett took his bride to his own cottage home and fertile fields. Their combined energy, sagacity, and religious tenacity were rewarded with the prosperous estate, Homelands, where their eight children were born.

This long roll call of men and women of pioneer spirit, these warriors skilled in combat and in government and great business, and these gentle women, devoted mothers with gifts of home-making and zeal for the mental and spiritual uplift of their fellows, are the ancestors of Belle H. Bennett.

Measured by standards of the twentieth century, the family government of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Bennett was strict. They exacted prompt obedience from their children; each child had his allotted task notwithstanding the fact that there were servants and caretakers. Belle was allowed a given number of white dresses per week; if she exceeded these she was required to iron them herself. In their effort to develop physical hardihood in their children they rarely permitted artificial heat in their bedrooms in winter months. They diligently strove to implant democratic ideals as regards their fellows in their young minds. Mrs. Bennett was most tenacious of family ties and could not be happy when her children were away from home. This tenacious hold upon family was shown in later years when the two younger sons arranged to enter a banking business in Kansas City, Mo. She was so unhappy that they returned to Kentucky, sacrificing their personal preference out of regard for her happiness.

Mrs. Bennett was a devoted member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the family worshiped at the little brick church, Providence, six miles from Richmond, built on land given by Mr. and Mrs. Bennett. It was one of the established rules that every member of the household must attend Church service on Sunday. One who enjoyed frequent hospitality there says: "The handsome Colonial home of the Bennetts was always filled with a gay company of young people, for their hospitality was unbounded and a warm, simple welcome made each one lucky enough

to be a guest feel at home. No guest stayed away from church on Sunday, and a cavalcade from the Bennett home would file into the country church, men and women separating and sitting on opposite sides, according to its quaint custom. Frequently other friends besides the house guests would be invited from Church to dinner. I remember once we sat down to the table with thirty." Sue and Belle had part in the Church work as soon as they could sing in the choir.

The Bennett children were all sent to the near-by country school until they completed its course. It was a glad day for little Belle when, with dinner pail and book in hand, she fared forth by the side of her brother Waller in quest of education at this little institution of learning. They learned far more than the books and teachers taught in this country school. They learned to love the beauty and the friendliness of nature in the hills and woods and streams; they learned when trees must bloom and come to fruitage, and many wonders of insect life were revealed to them. The birds became their friends; they knew their nests and habits and their different songs; full well they understood and heeded the thrush's wild lay, "O, fret not after knowledge."

This gracious influence of nature expanded and enriched her personality. The memories of this period so cemented the whole-hearted devotion of the brother and sister that changes and fullnesss of occupation could never separate them. It was to this brother, who never forgot to be gentle and courteous or full of concern for her comfort in their wildest sports, she turned for counsel in the years of maturity, and it was to him she committed the care of her personal business affairs. To give was the first requisite of her nature, and when she became submerged in her life work her generosity seemed prodigal to her friends, who chided sometimes lest in the kindness of her heart she should

become bankrupt. It was her wont to reply: "No. Waller will take care of that; he won't let me go to the poor-house."

One of her earliest and closest friends was Lucia Burnam, of Richmond, whom she first met at a dinner party at Homelands to which Mrs. Burnam and she had been invited. Little Lucia was ushered upon arrival into the nursery where "Mammy Ritter" was finishing Belle's toilet. With her characteristic impulse of sharing her good things, Belle began telling the little visitor the story of the "Little Red Hen" which she had recently read. This sharing of mental and social joys became habit as the years wore on. Miss Burnam describes this child of eight summers as having "deep blue eyes, straight blond hair, and very serious face for one so young." Little Lucia made many visits to the Bennett home, where these little girls romped with an abandon possible on an estate so vast. They played "ladies," or roasted eggs in the ashes of the great open fireplace. They stretched sheets on the kitchen floor, on which they dried peas to be hulled later, or made biscuit which they cut with thimbles. They rode horseback and raced, hunted bird nests and searched for wild flowers, and played the countless pranks their fertile imaginations suggested.

When Belle was eleven years of age she entered Dr. Robert Breck's private school. Dr. Breck, a noted Presbyterian divine and classical scholar, was the first Chancellor of Central University of Kentucky. In winter months she boarded in town, going home for week ends. In spring and fall she came daily six miles from Homelands, a far greater physical tax than it is in these days of rapid transit. It was in Dr. Breck's school that Miss Bennett laid the foundations of the education which continued through life, for she never ceased learning. Dr. Breck's scholarly attainments and strength of character

kindled mental ambition and sent her in search of truth. She claimed so little for herself that her family did not recognize the unusual wealth of her personal nature, nor did they appreciate her varied talents when she was growing up. The records of this period show her writing compositions, playlets, girlish essays and book reviews, with a precision and order that make clear her mental possibilities and the high quality of training that sent her out into the world a lucid writer and accurate speaker. A habit of analysis was formed then which bore fruit in her illuminating Bible teaching in the after years.

From Dr. Breck's school Miss Bennett went to Nazareth, near Bardstown, Ky., and later to a school at College Hill, Ohio, ranked at that time among the best schools for young women in the West. During the years spent in school she developed her talent for music, and after finishing the academic courses she took voice training for a short period in Cincinnati. Her high soprano voice was of specially sweet quality. Music never lost its power over her. Emotional response to the great creations of the masters swayed her heart as the trees bend to the winds. She never lost an opportunity to hear a musician of note or attend a symphony concert. When she had long passed the fiftieth mile stone of her life the great Polish master, Paderewski, gave a recital while she chanced to be in New York. Seats had been sold days before, and though assured there was scarcely standing room she purchased a ticket and stood throughout the performance, perfectly unconscious of the inconvenience or fatigue. Again, she visited Chicago when Theodore Thomas' orchestra was conducting a series of concerts at Ravinia Park, and though she was just recovering from a protracted illness she persisted in sitting in the open long hours, night after night, under the mesmeric influence of divine harmonies. Miss Bennett loved the theater and the opera and made frequent

visits in her youth to Cincinnati and Louisville when good plays or music were offered. Shakespeare's tragedies, because of their faithful portrayal of human emotion, interested her most.

A faculty for reading pictures soon developed. With uncanny skill her imagination penetrated the thought or purpose of the artist, and the picture became a joy or source of pain as it interpreted its master's mind. She had fondness for color, for the rich coloring of the old paintings, and she had a clear eye for symmetry and proportions. Like all great and strong natures she liked best contact with strength and greatness, and pictures and statuary that expressed virile strength appealed to her most. Her preference for Michelangelo's statue of Moses over all other statuary reveals this love for strength in art. Thirteen years before her death this attraction was revealed when a large sepia print of a wonderfully proportioned, powerful face of an Indian chief seized her fancy while visiting Albuquerque. She promptly purchased it, and it hung with forty other beautiful pictures on the walls of her room.

From girlhood Miss Bennett was an omnivorous reader. She reveled in fairy stories and in the mythology of the Greeks and the Norsemen. She loved the human interests of fiction and that which excited her imagination. Especially did she care for books of travel. The mysticism of Browning made a wonderful appeal to her, even in her youth. She took greatest delight in history, particularly that which referred to Colonial and Revolutionary periods and the subsequent Constitutional development of her own country. This gave her unusual knowledge of constitutional law which in other years served to good purpose in her work in the United States. Nor did she confine her interests to this country. She reached out for knowledge of the other nations of the world. Her imagination breathed life into the peoples with whom history dealt, and she lived

in their times, became conversant with the principles underlying their moral order, and shared their human ambitions and struggles.

Miss Bennett always possessed the keenest sense of humor, which enlivened any group, no matter how seriously inclined. It gave spice and variety to her conversation and set at ease any stranger, however diffident. Her gentleness of manner and thoughtfulness of the feelings of others saved her from sarcasm, which frequently accompanies this gift. This sense of humor became a most helpful factor in her official life.

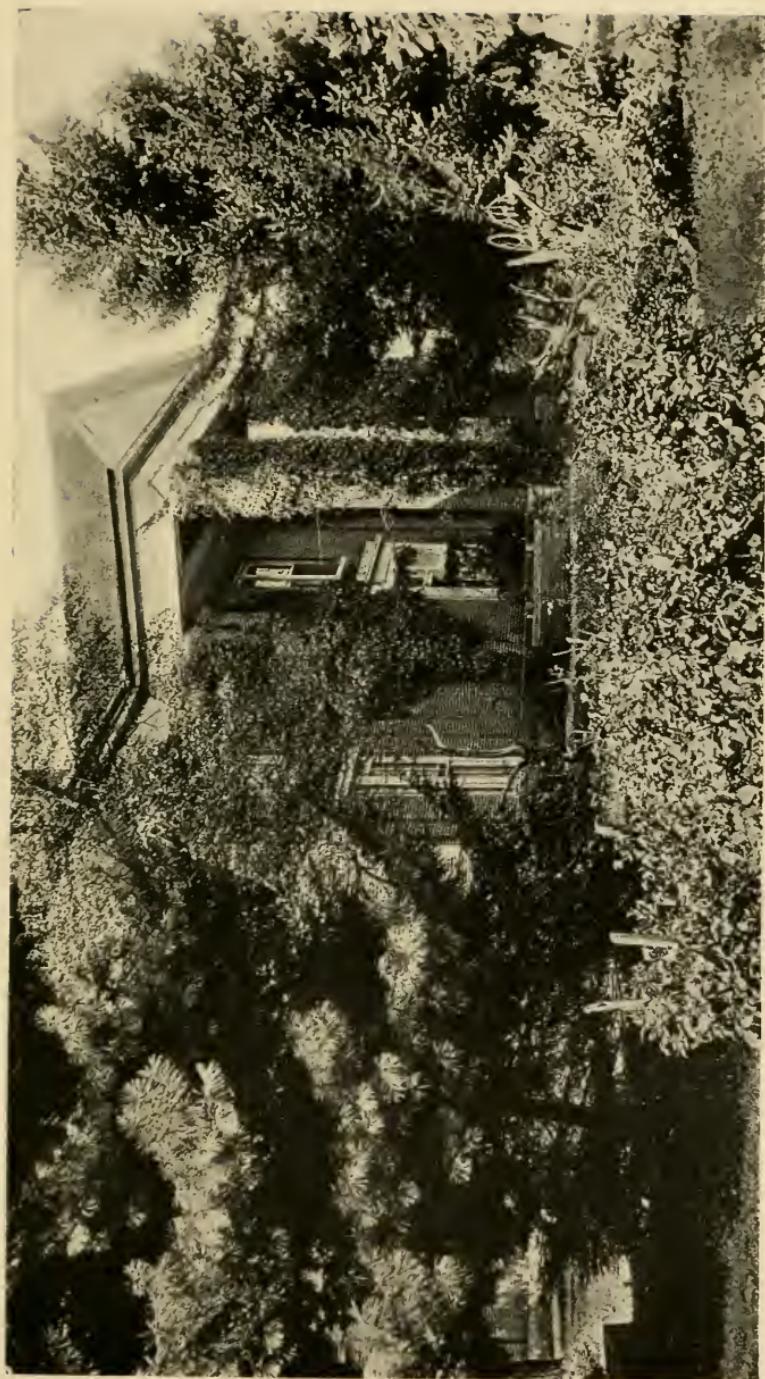
As a schoolgirl she had a large circle of friends and entered into the social life about her. Gentleness and dignity of bearing were distinguishing characteristics even at that age, and as she matured into young ladyhood she was crowned with all the graces of Southern womanhood. Parties, dancing, horseback riding, and other forms of gayety became her social diversions. Miss Kate Helm, daughter of Gen. Ben Hardin Helm, an intimate friend for many years, describes her at this time as being "very handsome, with tall graceful figure. She had blue eyes and ash blond hair (that unusual and very beautiful color). Her complexion was creamy white with delicate pink cheeks and lips—there was never a trace of anything artificial about it. This beauty, combined with her unusually fascinating manner of expressing herself, made her a rare personality." The Bennett home always abounded in hospitality, and during Miss Bennett's youth it was the scene of much gayety. Friends and suitors came from a distance to visit her. In these years of merry-making she spent two seasons at the State capital with her brother John, who was a member of the Senate. She was perhaps the most admired young woman at the many social functions in Frankfort. Again she was the gayest of the gay and a reigning belle at the Mardi Gras in New Orleans, and for several seasons was

entertained and feted in many other cities of the South. She was one of the most sought-after young women of that day in Central Kentucky. Her inability to find responsive regard for any one of the many who sought her hand in marriage was a strange contradiction of the most outstanding quality of her nature, for her power to love and beget love and her dependence upon it was most unusual.

When Miss Bennett was a young girl her brother William married Miss Annie Neale, and later Mr. James Bennett married Miss Sarah M. Clay, daughter of Gen. Cassius Clay, whose estate adjoined Homelands. Mrs. James Bennett and her sister, Miss Laura Clay, were ardent pioneers in the woman's suffrage movement of this country. Their opposition to the world's attitude toward woman as man's inferior met sympathetic response in the heart of this young girl which later found vigorous expression in her struggle for the right of women to have voice and vote in the councils of the Church.

Another molding influence in Miss Bennett's life was her older sister, Miss Sue Bennett. By her rare sweetness of disposition, unselfish nature and abiding cheerfulness, she won her way to the hearts of all the family, but it was through her ability to understand and sympathize with the younger sister and enter into fellowship with her aspirations that she strengthened Belle's life purposes. In her serious hours she was most confidential with her older sister, who encouraged her to cherish every impulse to serve and to follow the quest of her soul.

A new experience came to Miss Bennett in these days of social gayety through the sudden death of Mrs. William Bennett. It was her first acquaintance with sorrow and opened to her inquiring mind the question of immortality. The bereaved husband returned to the parental roof with his four small children, the youngest being a few days old. The responsibility for the care and training of these chil-



"HOMELANDS"  
WHERE MISS BENNETT LIVED MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS



dren largely devolved upon Miss Sue Bennett, and to her need for help the generous heart of the younger sister responded with ready assistance.

Among Miss Belle Bennett's endowments were her capacity for family devotion and great gift for home-making. Soon after Mr. Samuel Bennett's death in 1888 Mrs. Bennett and the two daughters moved from Homelands to Richmond, where the sons already were established. Miss Sue's death within a year and Mrs. Bennett's advanced age threw the responsibility of the home-making upon Belle. The gracious hospitality of the country was continued in the town home, and whether at Homelands or in Richmond the parental roof was counted home. Sons and daughters-in-law and grandchildren gathered there for anniversaries and social functions, and the duties of hostess naturally passed to Miss Bennett. She was ever a cordial, charming hostess. The younger brothers during these years married and set up their own homes. Samuel Bennett, Jr., married Miss Mary Warfield, and Mr. Waller Bennett and Miss Mary Burnam were married in 1896. When the mother passed away in 1897, Miss Bennett alone of the big family was left in the home, and with heroic courage she turned the key that forever locked the door upon that which had been her dearest earthly possession. In loneliness she turned to Mr. and Mrs. Waller Bennett, in whose home she found welcome without measure.

In these seven years of residence in Richmond Miss Bennett had been called to leadership in the Church of her fathers. Her official duties so multiplied and absorbed her thought that she soon found it necessary to surrender the joys of family association in the home of her brother and to reside at the hotel, where she might devote her whole attention to the work. Miss Bennett was too perfect a home-maker to locate in a colorless place, such as the phrase "room at a hotel" would indicate. How perfectly her personality

found expression in material things is pictured in Miss Emily Olmstead's description of her room:

"I well recall the cry of admiration that involuntarily escaped me when she threw open the door to her room. The massive four-poster bed with its canopied top, the high, old-fashioned bureau, the mahogany secretary and book case combined—all bespoke the colonial style. Afterwards, I learned that some of the furniture had come down to her from one generation to another from the Chenault family, who originally came to Kentucky from Virginia. On the walls of her room were forty beautiful pictures. Over the mantel was a large oil painting of her father, whose gentle, sweet face was not unlike his daughter's. Everywhere there was an air of elegance and comfort which set her room apart from every other in the hotel. Just outside her room in the hall were handsome mahogany bookcases containing her rare collection of books."

For twenty years Miss Bennett called this hotel home, save for an interlude of eighteen months when, in recognition of the sacredness of family obligation and deep affection, she gave herself to the care of her brother, Hon. John Bennett, in his last illness. When the doctors gave no hope of his recovery, she moved into a beautiful house and equipped it for his comfort. In this real home, with the assistance of a competent nurse, she gave him the attention that only love could provide. Early in the first days of invalidism it was her privilege to stand by his side as he professed faith in Christ and was baptized. When he died she returned to the hotel.

The blending of this atmosphere of family devotion and cultural environment produced in Miss Bennett a rare quality of personality. The traditions of her forefathers likewise awakened her powers of idealism. They were idealists: they believed it possible to build a great republic in this "New World," a great nation of free and happy folk

where men and women have an equal chance, a nation whose civilization shall be Christian, and they believed it so surely they gave their lives to attain the goal. It was this ability to believe absolutely in a vision of opportunity and so visualizing it as to command coöperation of others in bringing it to realization that made her great.

## CHAPTER II

### EQUIPPED FOR HIGH LEADERSHIP

IN the midst of all her social activities Miss Bennett carried serious thought and earnest yearnings for things of spiritual value. Her understanding heart enabled her to enter into fellowship with all suffering, and even as a care-free girl she had rare skill in comfort's art. But she did not realize then that "the two things that determine the way of life for each of us are the road of our longing and the quality of our soul," nor that these would lead her to paths where God calls: "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

She had worked in the Sunday school and sung in the choir even while the world of social gayety allured her responsive nature. These were the only Church activities open to Methodist women at that time; the Woman's Missionary Society had not yet been authorized by the General Conference. Despite these forms of service, she did not take upon herself the vows of Church membership until 1875, when she was twenty-three years of age. Dr. Lapsley McKee, a distinguished Presbyterian divine, conducted an evangelistic meeting in Richmond, Ky., that year, and there must have come to her then a profound conviction that "the Church is the organized expression of God in the soul of man" created for the furtherance of the gospel throughout the world, for immediately thereafter she joined old Providence, the Church near Homelands where the family had worshiped many years.

No increased activities came to her in this new relation to the Church, but to her active temperament acceptance of responsibility which Church membership involved meant search for increased fields for Church endeavor. She be-

gan friendly visiting among the poor in Madison County, which revealed a community devoid of religious opportunity. With Miss Sue's help plans for a Sunday school in that neighborhood were made. An abandoned building near a grist mill was secured and made ready for use, children were invited to come, and the date was fixed for an opening. When the day arrived a group of gay young people from Richmond came to spend the afternoon in her home. To one of Miss Bennett's standard of hospitality, a battle between a sense of courtesy and an obligation to a newly established program of religious activity was inevitable. In the light of after years it is not difficult to picture her look of determination, as with characteristic upward thrust of her chin she "never turned her back but marched breast forward" to the task she had set in the zeal of her perfect consecration to God and his Church. She always reckoned the victory of obedience to his call to serve in the little grist-mill Sunday school in Madison County the determining factor of her large leadership. "Obedience is the price one must pay for the conscious reality of God" became a slogan of her leadership, and she always claimed it was the "key to unlock the treasure house of God." Obedience was the theme she used oftenest in Bible readings or devotional addresses in the long years of her public ministry. Often she expressed her gratitude for the heaven-born victory of her first test of "obedience to the heavenly vision" in these lines:

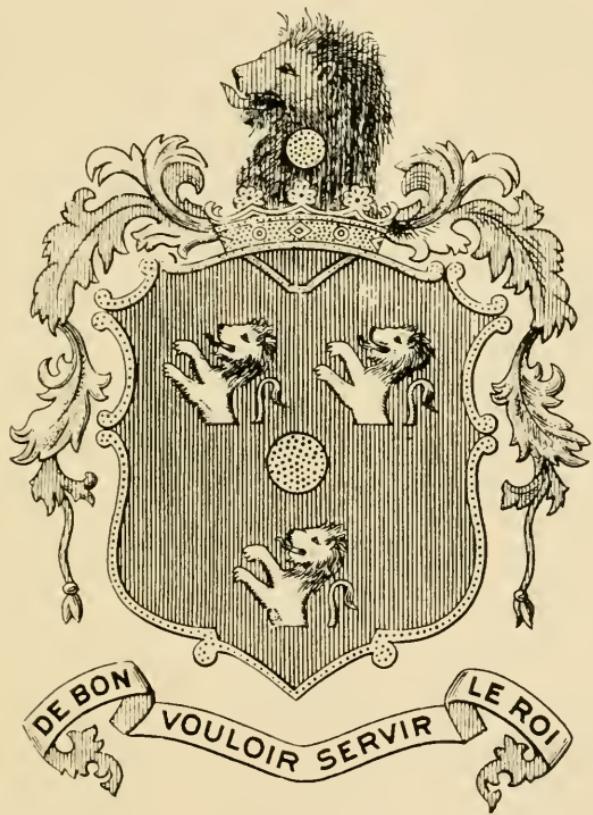
"Had Moses failed to go, had God  
Granted his prayer, there would have been  
For him no leadership to win;  
No pillared fire; no magic rod;  
No wonders in the land of Zion;  
No smiting of the sea; no tears  
Ecstatic, shed on Sinai's steep;  
No Nebo, with a God to keep  
His burial; only forty years  
Of desert, watching with his sheep."

Miss Bennett was richly temperamental, and her zealous spirit was often filled with divine discontent as she reached upward and outward in God's service. In these years of adjustment of her natural life to the divine, she spent a season at Lake Chautauqua, N. Y., when her zeal was greatly quickened by the inspirational addresses, and her longing for a more perfect life was intensified. Returning to Richmond, she confided to a sympathetic friend something of her divine discontent. "I have spent my life in frivolity and idleness. Now I mean to give it wholly to the Lord," she declared. That year, 1884, the Rev. George O. Barnes, a Presbyterian evangelist of great culture and spiritual power, visited Richmond, and through him God opened to her the larger possibilities and greater privileges of a life conformed to his law of perfect love; then it was her "belief passed into faith." He helped her catch a vision of a kingdom won by Christ and persons like herself working with him as God's eternal purpose for the universe. This conception of God's plan for workfellowship of man with the Christ filled her soul with perfect love and joy unspeakable. It brought to her a consuming desire to know what part God had for her to play in the consummation of

"That far-off divine event  
To which the whole creation moves.

In Miss Bennett's eagerness for fellowship and growth in her new-found joy, she arranged to visit her kinsman, Dr. J. W. Chenault, in Louisville, Ky., that she might spend some time with Miss Mette Thompson and her sister Harriet, whom she knew to be Spirit-filled women. Miss Harriet Thompson gives this vivid picture of her earnest searchings at this time:

"My oldest sister married Dr. J. W. Chenault, first cousin to Miss Bennett, and my sister Mette and I were members of their household. We naturally learned



COAT OF ARMS OF THE BENNETT FAMILY



much of Miss Bennett and her family through this connection by marriage. Our close Christian friendship with her had its beginning in the fall of 1884 or in the early winter following, when she spent several months in the Chenault home.

"On her arrival she told my sister Mette that she had lately, under the teachings of George O. Barnes, received the definite baptism of the Spirit, that she had heard of her walking in the strength of a like baptism, and that she had come to Louisville to be with her that she might learn from her more of the Spirit's work in and through consecrated and baptized Christians. These two blessed young women spent all available hours of the winter in prayerful Bible study together, trusting the Spirit to lead them further into the truth concerning himself. The baptism of power in the Holy Spirit, wisdom and safety of walking in obedience, and the branches of Christian service to which their hearts were inclined were the themes of their conversations, Bible study, and prayers.

"Like D. L. Moody, Miss Bennett was not specially called to teach those passages of the Bible that have immediate bearing upon this great truth, though like him she bore witness on all suitable occasions. She lived and labored in utmost loyalty to the Church, but was saved from the sin and folly of separatism, and no woman was ever led into error or excess through her teaching.

"I quoted once in her hearing Isaiah 58: 13, 14. She was deeply impressed with the passage. It took hold of her heart. One night as she sought in prayer to consecrate her life fully to God's service these words stood out before her and she cried aloud: 'As best I could I have turned away my foot from the Sabbath, from doing my pleasure on thy holy day. I do call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord. I have honored thee, not doing my own ways, nor finding my own pleasure, not speaking my own words; and the promises based on these conditions are mine. Thou wilt cause me to ride on the high places of the earth and feed me with the heritage of Jacob, my Father.' In recalling this incident to me several years later she said, 'The passage at that time was so illuminated to me that I saw the "heritage of Jacob" meant leadership for Him;

it was so quickened and applied to my own heart I knew it meant God-given leadership for me.””

This definite experience of the enduement of the Holy Spirit and assurance of God-given leadership never wavered; it was the dynamic that sent her out to serve with a joy that could say with the twentieth-century singer of Georgia:

“My joyous thoughts outrun  
The driven chariot of the morning sun;  
And swift my soul would dare heights yet untrod.  
What time my feet are chained to sod  
My spirit dares to dwell these heights upon—  
The consecrate and solemn heights of God.””

At the time of her vivid experience of the presence and power of God, Christian thought and hope centered about the future life and the joy of the other world—the “light of eternal values cast a shade over the temporal.” To her practical mind the fact that Christ lost his life in the “body of humanity to which he belonged” brought to her quickened faith a larger evaluation of human personality and the infinite possibilities of the people about her. Her faith was always childlike; she trusted God and tried to obey him; she sought to make the personal life of Christ real to man; it was the Christ and not doctrine about him she tried to share. The law of love for her fellows became for her the one road to the heart of God as she measured her love to him by Christ’s declaration: “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen.” It was inevitable that with her habit of love this new sensitiveness to spiritual currents could issue only in service which made the world a better place for man to work and live in, a place where he might grow into Godlikeness.

Miss Bennett early learned to keep her friendship with God vital by constant communion with him. Prayer be-

came her supreme expression. She soon found that there was no limit to the release of divine favor when the life conformed to God's law of love. She was so definite and direct when she prayed, it was as though she talked with a friend waiting near her. She literally waited upon God that she might know his will for herself and for the work committed to her care. She prayed for her loved ones, and God only knows the strengthened hearts and enriched lives given to the world and the Church because she labored for them in prayer. "I do not fail to pray for you more and oftener than I can say" was the oft-repeated assurance to those with whom she worked. The burden of her prayers was for the Church, for the extension of God's kingdom at home and abroad, for sending forth "laborers into the fields white unto the harvest," and for the release of God's money for the work. She prayed for her critics and for her enemies. Once when sharing her prayer with an intimate friend, she pleaded in loving tenderness for one whose criticism had made her work difficult, and when surprise was expressed she quickly responded: "I cannot have peace with God if I harbor these things in my heart."

Miss Bennett's social nature was revealed through her passion for sharing her prayer life with friends. All through the South there are women whose prayer lives have been quickened because of her habit of sharing periods of supplication with them. Mrs. Luke G. Johnson, of Georgia, a long-time workfellow with her, tells this beautiful story of her fellowship in prayer:

"No one characteristic of her life is so fixed upon the memory of her associates as her prayer life. The 'morning watch' was her daily habit. At the breaking of the day she was always found with Him. In the stress and strain of the unthinkable burdens which were hers, she oftentimes said to those nearest her: 'But for that early hour with Jesus this morning I don't see how I could have passed through this day.' Her official as-

sociates and closest friends knew her habits, and with eagerness, when together with her in the hotels, they often timidly knocked at the door of her room in the early morning if perchance they might kneel around that bed with her. Around that bed, in prayer with her in the early morning hours, many victories in the work were fought, victories of achievement, or victories of spirit, as strength was found to meet defeat. Throughout all the years, no meeting was entered, no plan espoused, until at least the 'two or three' or more had knelt with her at Jesus' feet. Again we seem to hear those words to which we have listened so long: 'O Master, not our will, but thine be done.' "

Miss Bennett covenanted with God's praying children to make special prayer for specific needs. Oftentimes she listed petitions with dates of month and year and verse of Scripture claimed as the foundation of her faith. One such register reads: "Asheville, N. C., July 6, 1905. Mrs. — and I asked to be led in a plain path about the establishment of another training school for Christian workers. Psalm 27: 11, the particular promise pleaded." A later entry records: "Another training school established by Dr. Lambuth." Another record states: "Richmond, October 24, 1907: Covenanted with Mrs. — to ask God to make us soul winners, pleading Matthew 7: 7, 8. Ask daily, seek the individuals, knock at their hearts. Use Revelation 3: 20." In the answered column this fact is noted: "First fruits. Mrs. — asked me on the 29th of October to go and see —. We went together October 30. I sought them with the Word, and all three surrendered in half an hour. — and his mother were baptized that night; the sister goes to the Christian Church." Across the margin is written, "Saloon keeper's family."

The first prayer calendar issued by Southern Methodist women had its origin in Miss Bennett's love of sharing prayers with her friends. For missionary facts, scriptural references, and suggestions for intercession this forerun-

ner of prayer calendars has not been surpassed. Mrs. Mary Bruce Alexander, a missionary many years in Brazil and later a pioneer in home missions among Latin Americans, gives this account of how this booklet was issued:

"In 1896 I went through the Kentucky Conference organizing Woman's Missionary Societies and frequently stopped between trains with Miss Bennett in Richmond. In January there was a dreadful blizzard, and I could not go forward with my work; so I stopped with her until the weather was more propitious. It was then, in prayer, we conceived the idea of a Prayer Calendar, and in two weeks we got it ready to print. I took the manuscript to Lexington to be printed and mailed the booklet when finished from my home."

Miss Bennett found greatest pleasure in bearing testimony of a prayer-hearing God. "Answer to prayer has been so manifest and so marvelous, in a way, during the past year that the presence of Christ seems, nearly always, very consciously with me," she wrote in 1919 to her friend, Mrs. J. C. Lewis. Such a statement is duplicated in numberless letters throughout the years.

Early in Miss Bennett's spiritual experience she suffered a period of depression for which there seemed no cause. During this priod she visited Ocean Grove with her friends, Miss Mary Helm and Miss Harriet Thompson. While there she confided her distress to Miss Thompson, saying despite much heart-searching she had not been able to discover known sin that was breaking her communion with God, but that her persistent prayer for relief had been unavailing. Miss Thompson's account of this period throws a flood of light upon the after-power of her influence:

"When she told me these things I said to her: 'I think your trouble is leanness of soul, caused by lack of spiritual nourishment. Have you not in your busy life felt driven to neglect the Word of God, the food he has provided for your soul?' She perceived that

this had been her difficulty and entered at once upon diligent Bible study, beginning with Ephesians. Very soon she realized that her spiritual drought ceased, that life was given to her messages, that leanness of soul was relieved, and that her peace and joy in Christ had returned.

"Miss Bennett had not wholly neglected her Bible. She had been faithful in reading or studying it 'when she could find time.' But it had been crowded into the background of her life by Christian service. She had not set aside and maintained an early hour each day for quiet, prayerful, uninterrupted study of God's Word as food for the soul until she had this experience."

Ever afterwards it was her habit to spend some time every day in Bible study. She memorized not only chapters for their beauty and heart comfort, but she committed whole books to memory. This verbal knowledge so fed her mind that her English reflected the classical language of the King James Version of the Bible. Her soul met its spiritual needs perfectly in the promises of this Word of Words, and it so helped her to self-knowledge and self-analysis that she joyfully lived by it. She had no fear of scientific study of the Bible, but believed its hold upon the future generations would be strengthened by the most complete knowledge of its origin and message. Her social nature reveled in sharing Bible study with others. "I have found always that to study His Word with some one and get his will together in prayer strengthens me more than I can say," she wrote to Mrs. J. C. Lewis. To numberless other friends she gave testimony of her joy in such companionship. Her devoted Secretary, Miss Emily Olmstead, vividly describes this love of sharing her study of God's Word with others in her beautiful brochure, "Intimate Glimpses":

"In her letters while away she often wrote: 'How I miss our quiet hour together each morning! I shall be happy to get back home.' Immediately after break-

fast we always went to her room to commence the day's work, which varied very little, when she was at home, throughout the four years of my stay with her. First, always, the quiet hour together about nine o'clock. It was often interrupted by some member of the family connection; sometimes by a friend needing help or advice; quite often by a telephone call; but the lesson was always resumed. Occasionally, if a friend who was sympathetic chanced to come in, that friend was invited to share our study."

Miss Bennett's memory work was largely confined to the King James Version of the Bible, though she greatly appreciated the American Edition of the Revised Version as being clearer to the modern mind. She welcomed the later translations of the New Testament as commentaries upon the older, more stately versions. Weymouth's was a great comfort in the days of her invalidism.

Throughout the South there are thousands who remember the unction and power of her messages and Bible lessons. She constantly urged the importance of earnest, intelligent study of God's Word, whether she spoke to audiences or to persons whom she met in social life. Miss Harriet Thompson's account of an address before young women, which it was her privilege to hear, illustrates this habit of trying to persuade others to seek inspiration through the Word of God:

"When in St. Louis at one time she accepted an invitation to speak on consecration at the vesper service of the Young Woman's Christian Association. Until her hour was almost past she seemed to have forgotten her allotted subject. From memory I recall that in the earlier part of the address she said: 'The subject allotted me is consecration. It is probable that a number of you young women will become busy workers for Christ and will have leanness of soul as I did. I want to say to you that in all my Christian life I have encountered nothing that required such thorough, persistent, heroic consecration to God's will as the daily study of a sufficient portion of the Word of God to

keep my own soul properly nourished.' She dwelt at length on the power and value of the Word of God as food for the soul. Near the close of her address she gave an account of the prolonged season of spiritual drought that left little life in her Bible talks and was accompanied by deep depression which she suffered in the midst of most strenuous service for Christ."

Miss Bennett's insight into the meaning of Scripture, and unusual power of interpretation and application, made her a great Bible teacher. Very little remains of this work save that which lodged in the hearts and minds of her hearers, as she preserved few notes. She despised the mechanical drudgery of writing; it was really difficult and slow work for her, and she never learned to use the typewriter; hence there are few outlines or copies of those lessons which the Spirit used for the enrichment of many lives and for the outleading of laborers into the fields of service.

She was never argumentative in presenting what she believed the Word of God taught; she had a way of assuming the concurrence of her hearers with such persuasive power that she impelled assent. A great part of her power was the fine quality of her voice, but she revealed her real secret in a letter to the Home Secretary of the Council in 1918, when she wrote: "It takes a heart life—*a lived experience*—to interpret the Word of God." Her success as teacher in the Sunday school, before pressure of her office interfered with routine work, testifies to this power of her "*lived experience*," while the successful organization of a Negro Bible study class under the outleading of the Holy Spirit makes sure his acceptance of her interpretation of his Word. In 1906 she was driven by the Spirit, through the suffering of a broken-hearted friend, to the formation of a woman's Bible class with her friends and associates at Richmond, Ky. Of this Bible study class a member writes:

"It began with only three or four women who came together every week to study their Bibles, and it quick-

ly grew to twenty-five or more. I remember that some minister said the textbooks she had chosen were too difficult for such a class, but it was quite the reverse, and every member of the class studied the assigned lesson faithfully. Belle and Mrs. Roark (wife of the President of the Normal School) were the regular leaders, but soon different leaders were assigned, and some splendid Sunday school teachers were developed and great spiritual help came to all from this class."

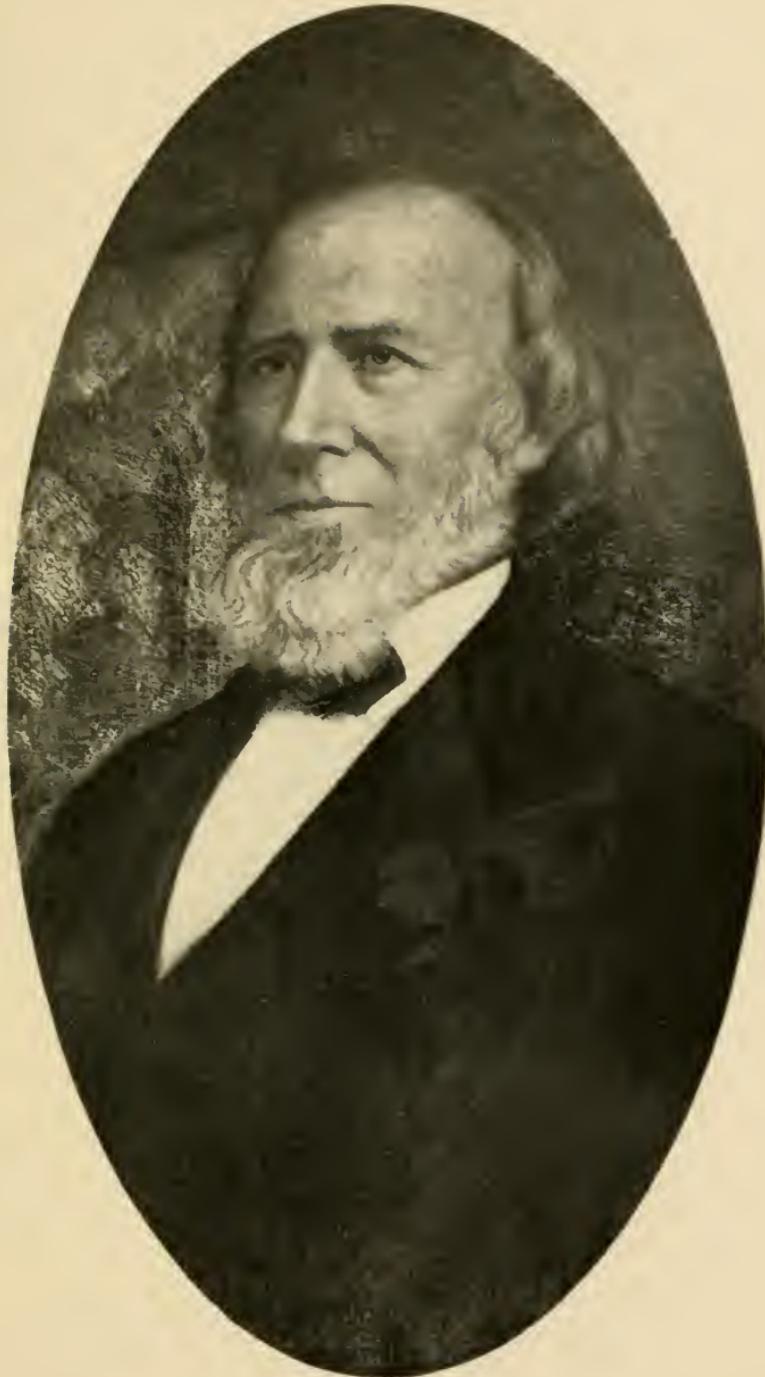
While she was a friend to scientific Bible study, that she was wise and cautious in methods of teaching young people and immature minds is shown by her letter to a young teacher who had submitted an outline of one of her courses: "It was good to get your note and general outline in the last mail. *I like it*, but *know* your pupils before you give them strong meat. Most of them will be young, unaccustomed to think for themselves, and ready to accept what you give them. *Your* word will be the law and *gospel* to them. What you say will go through them to many others. Let *your* testimony be clear and *sure!*"

Outstanding in Miss Bennett's career was the dedication of her life to service through the Church. It was the channel through which she could best spread the news of salvation, and for this she believed it was created. Her regard for the Church was not that of the sectarian. She was a Methodist, not because it was the Church of her fathers; but because she loved its evangelistic fervor and its connectional spirit, she was loyal to this branch of the Church universal. Her devotion to the Church of God was not that of the ignorant zealot, for she knew Church history and full well recognized the human blunders that had marred and hindered its divine mission in all the ages. The fact that God "at sundry times and in divers manners" had raised up heaven-born leaders to correct and overthrow the wrong, and the Church militant had triumphed, kept her faith in its divine mission unwavering.

Just how truly she considered the Church of God a divine institution is expressed in this paragraph of a letter to Mrs. L. H. Glide: "I hope neither the Red Cross with its insistent and splendid appeals, nor any other of the War Council work, has as yet made you feel poor. Our great Leader called His Church into the trenches facing all the forces of hell two thousand years ago, and the brave little army with the few recruits that join each year cannot be slackers now. Maybe, if he comes soon, he will put a draft law in force! Do you think he will?"

Miss Bennett's attitude toward methods of financing the Church was positive. In the beginning of her career as a Church worker her fragmentary daily journal records, with evident irritation of spirit, participation in a festival for some local Church affair. The study of the Word of God convinced her that tithes and offerings, stewardship of time and money, was God's plan for financing the kingdom, and as the years passed she was so convinced on this subject that she positively suffered when devices that brought the Church before the public as a money-making institution were resorted to. When she became active in the Home Mission Society, in 1893, her energies were centered upon getting the women of the Church to study the Bible on this subject through a department known as Systematic Giving. A third of a century this educative work went forward through her influence. It was this habit of stewardship which enabled her to give so generously and to serve so continuously in the kingdom.

Miss Bennett was deeply emotional. Without this characteristic she would have lacked that power of expression which never failed to persuade or interest her audiences. She found response to her emotional nature in Church music and the hymns that fastened special truth on the soul or made duty appealing by their rhythm. The study



SAMUEL BENNETT



of hymnology fascinated her and fed her spiritual life. Her love for Charles Wesley's hymn,

“Lord, in the strength of grace  
With a glad heart and free,  
My self, my residue of days  
I consecrate to thee,”

sung to the tune of Greenwood, always renewed her consecration. “Jesus, Lover of My Soul,” that she learned at her mother's knee, and George Matheson's song of assurance,

“O love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee,”

were favorite expressions of her trust in God's love, while Faber's verse

“For the love of God is broader  
Than the measure of man's mind;  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind,”

comforted and strengthened when she felt she had erred. When feeling the need of assurance of the Spirit's presence, involuntarily she sang:

“Spirit of God! descend upon my heart;  
Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;  
Teach me the struggle of the soul to bear,  
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;  
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.”

Maltbie Babcock's great hymn always incited to valor and renewed effort:

“Be strong!  
It matters not how deep intrenched the wrong,  
How hard the battle goes, the day, how long;  
Faint not, fight on! To-morrow comes the song.”

Her faith in God's plan of using man as his workfellow

in the redemption of the world found expression in Washington Gladden's hymn:

“O Master, let me walk with thee  
In lowly paths of service free.  
Help me the slow of heart to move  
By some clear, winning word of love;  
Teach me the wayward feet to stay,  
And guide them in the homeward way.”

Her favorite song for her brother's children when she took them on her knee was:

“I think when I read that sweet story of old,  
When Jesus was here among men,  
How he called little children like lambs to his fold,  
I should like to have been with him then.”

She taught them each verse of the hymn and rewarded them for learning Kipling's “Recessional.”

After Miss Bennett's experience in the marvelous illumination of Isaiah 58: 13-15, she could never fail to hallow the Sabbath day. It became to her a day made for man, not merely for rest, or to refrain from week-day occupations, but one for soul communion with the Father. It was on these days he gave her glimpses of social wrongs and visions of truth, and quickened her passion for great world tasks to which he called her to enter in fellowship with himself. It was from these Sabbaths of communion she gathered courage to tackle gigantic world problems; and empowered beyond her natural self, she rallied the women of the Church to fellowship in the task.

What the Sabbath meant in her spiritual life was revealed to a fellow traveler one glorious Easter day in the wonderful Mariposa Valley of the Yosemite. For the sole reason that she could not travel in clear conscience, though there was need to press on, they tarried over Sabbath at the lonely little inn nestling in great banks of snow on the

outer rim of the old forest of great Sequoia trees. There were no other guests at the inn; a holy quietness rested upon this primeval scene fresh from the hand of God despite the multiplied thousands of years since he had pronounced it good. The gospel story of the resurrection was the only Scripture to be studied on such a day and in the hands of this teacher of spirit-insight the glow of the exalted assurance of immortality through Calvary's love cast a never-forgotten halo about the Sunday in that valley of butterflies. One could not wonder after this day that she counted the Sabbath a delight.

The Ensley Community House is a monument to her Sabbath-keeping covenant. She saw the great iron and steel plants for the first time early one March Monday while waiting for the midday train because she stopped over Sabbath in Birmingham, Ala., in obedience to her agreement with her Lord. The great number of foreign-born workmen in the plants and hundreds of foreign children in the streets challenged her friendly spirit to a venture in friendship which eventuated in one of the largest evangelistic Americanization centers in the South. God gave her other and repeated assurance of blessing upon her work because of her inviolable rule of keeping the Sabbath day holy.

It was not easy to be faithful to such a vow in a modern world with a life of as varied interests as was hers; just how difficult is made plain by a letter dated March 15, 1920, to Miss Mabel Howell, Secretary of Oriental Fields of the Woman's Missionary Council:

"I hope you had my letter this morning—indeed, I am sure you did—because it should have reached Nashville yesterday. I have yours of March 13 in my hand now. Yes, Mrs. Ross wrote me the dates of the Estimates Committee meeting, March 22, 23, 24. I have been hoping so much that I would be well enough to attend that meeting that I did not realize until Saturday afternoon, when the Deaconess called my attention

to the fact, that *Monday* was the 22d. All of these ten years since the organization of the Council I have tried to get our official friends at Nashville not to fix important committee meetings which I should attend on Monday. I do not travel on Sunday if it can possibly be avoided. I think you know better than any other member of the Woman's Council just what the 13th verse of the 58th chapter of Isaiah has meant to me and to my life since I made my surrender to our God and Father. In all of these nearly or quite thirty years, I have never traveled on Sunday except when I was on the ocean or trying to reach some member of the family or some loved one who was desperately ill; or when I was with some party of Church people who did not regard the Sabbath as I must if I am true to my vow to God. I have a good many times during these past ten years been compelled to go to Louisville or Nashville on Saturday, spend the Sunday at the hotel, that I might be at the Publishing House on Monday morning. This of course is a double expense for me as well as a loss of time. In all of these years I am quite sure that I have not written as many as a half dozen notes, and never a letter, on Sunday. Of course, I have had to set my face like a flint, and have many a battle on the subject. The Church of God is the most *destructive critic* of the Word of God, in its interpretation and witness, that I know.

"Now, dear friend, I am telling you this because I want you to help me as much as you can at that end of the line; when I travel on Sunday, it is a direct violation of my own conscience, and I do not fail to suffer from it."

Mrs. Luke Johnson gives this graphic picture of a Sabbath in Europe where, as members of a Church Commission, she and Miss Bennett were traveling immediately after the World War:

"To some of her closest friends who did not so regard this holy day and felt that she sometimes afflicted herself in its keeping, she would reply: 'You may not hold the Sabbath day holy, sacred unto Him, but as for me it is my delight—it is his. So thorough was this consecration and fidelity to her vow that she refused

to open her mail on the Sabbath day, to speak her own words, or to find her own pleasure. She suffered visible pain if long continental or world-wide travel necessitated her continuous going on the Sabbath day. Some who were with her much recall these days—days beyond her control—but given to reading his words, singing his songs, and ‘talking to him.’

“This friend can ne’er forget one Sabbath day landing with her in Liverpool, following the party across England to London—a half day’s journey in an English compartment car. We seem to see her now on that Sabbath afternoon nestling close to the friend in the corner of the compartment that others might not be disturbed, refusing to read the daily paper, but pouring out God’s Word as it was hid in her heart, and with the friend, singing softly his precious promises, even in the midst of the din and roar of the railway car! The Sabbath day? It was sacred to her. It was her ‘delight,’ as she delighted herself in him. And verily, he caused her to ride upon the high places of the earth, and he fed her with the heritage of the saints of old—for the mouth of the Lord had spoken it.”

It was this faith in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, this love and study of God’s Word and obedience to his will, that determined the way of life for Belle Harris Bennett. It brought her that marvelous trust and confidence in God which imparted that audacious faith with which she ventured to build great enterprises in his name. It gave her amazing faith in the women and children of the Church—in mankind—through whom she launched “great things and difficult.” It so fed her spirit with God’s marvelous love that she spent herself in spontaneous and uncalculating love for his children.

## CHAPTER III

### BUILDING A MISSIONARY TRAINING SCHOOL

THE years 1887 to 1893 were the most significant in the life of Belle Harris Bennett, as they were also of the utmost consequence to the missionary operations of the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It was in these years God opened her eyes, in the "Valley of Vision," to the need of skilled laborers in mission fields, and in unmistakable terms called her to lead the women of the Church into the establishment of a school where missionaries might be prepared for this difficult service. The story of this outleading of the Spirit is given in her own words in an interview concerning the Scarritt Bible and Training School, which fortunately has been preserved:

"When I first became interested in the missionary work my sister and I went to Carlisle, Ky., in the year 1887 to a missionary meeting. I heard there about our missionaries who had been sent out and could not help being impressed as to how they could do efficient work without any preparation and without a knowledge of the language. I thought and prayed about it until the thing burned itself into my heart. I talked with Miss Mary Helm and Mrs. Trueheart about it, and later on, I learned that Mrs. Lucy Rider Meyer, of Chicago, had returned from one of the mission fields in South America so burdened with the thought of the untrained workers being sent out that she and her husband had opened a small faith school in Chicago for the preparation of workers. I wrote to her and received the first little printed notice that she sent out for her school.

"The following summer I attended the New York Chautauqua and became a member of a class under Dean Wright, of Boston. I had thought and prayed so much over the establishment of a training school while there that after I returned from Chautauqua the



MRS. ELIZABETH CHENAULT BENNETT



conviction that this was the voice of God so deepened that one night as I lay in bed I suddenly sat upright responding in audible voice: 'Yes, Lord, I will do it.' A long illness followed. The annual meeting of the Kentucky Conference Woman's Missionary Society was held in Richmond in 1888, and I went in to the meeting, still somewhat invalided. There was no Recording Secretary, and I was selected to fill the place. At the close of the meeting I was elected President of the Conference Society.

"The Woman's Board of Foreign Missions met at Little Rock, Ark., in 1889, and at the urgent invitation of Mrs. S. C. Trueheart, a member of the Board from Kentucky, I went with her to that meeting to present my thought of a missionary training school. I had been made a member of the Committee on Examination of Missionary Candidates. Miss Helen Richardson, who was a missionary volunteer for appointment that year, met us in St. Louis, and we proceeded to examine her. My own part of the examination consisted in asking how much she knew of the Bible, how she had learned it, and how she had expected to teach it to a great people who had a religion of their own. She said she didn't know anything much. She was a district school-teacher and had always attended Sunday school and had heard of the wretched condition of the women in heathen lands, lands where there was no knowledge of Jesus Christ.

"After reaching Little Rock I talked with Miss Mary Helm, who was then living in the home of Mrs. D. H. McGavock, General Secretary of the Women's Board of Foreign Missions, and she became greatly interested and very urgent for me to present the cause to the women. She and Mrs. Trueheart arranged for me to have a time before the Board.

"I was a guest in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Thompson who were devoted members of the Methodist Church. Miss Nannie Holding and other missionary women, all strangers to me, were guests in the same home. Miss Holding, hearing of what was in my heart and knowing the great need herself, asked me the morning before I was to talk on the subject to go to her room that she might pray with me. She did so and gave me the passage: 'Commit thy work unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established.' It became the

promise on which Scarritt Bible and Training School was built. I was too sick and frightened to stand on my feet when I was called to speak before the Board. The President, Mrs. Juliana Hayes, seeing my condition, rose out of her chair and said: 'Come right here, Miss Bennett, sit down in this chair, and talk it over with us.' I did it, but stood when I became excited. I poured out the whole thought of my heart. I talked to them about the splendid training that was given doctors and lawyers and professional men of all kinds, yet we were trying to send out young men and women to the great dark lands to teach a new religion that they themselves knew nothing about. When I finished a few questions were asked and a prayer was called for in which Mrs. Nathan Scarritt, of Kansas City, Mo., led, asking God that we might have a training school for our missionaries."

Miss Bennett's depth of feeling, clear thought, and persuasive power of expression moved upon the mind and sympathies of the members of the Board. They were convinced of the injustice to the missionaries, and to the fields, of sending them out untested and untrained to meet the problems of presenting a new religion to peoples of other hoary faiths. Although they realized the difficulties involved, they promptly adopted the following resolution:

*"Resolved,* That the Board has heard Miss Bennett's address with pleasure and, recognizing the great importance of its subject, does hereby appoint her as agent of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to fully investigate the matter of a training school for missionaries and does empower her to present its claims throughout the Church, to enlist the sympathy and aid of workers, and to collect funds, reporting results to the Board.

*"Resolved,* That she be directed also to present this matter to other Mission Boards and to ask their interest and patronage with the view that their missionaries may have the benefit of the advantages thus secured.

*"Resolved,* That Miss Bennett be furnished by this Board with all necessary credentials to show that she is its duly appointed agent."

This swift response to her plea startled Miss Bennett. She had thought her work would be accomplished when the message was delivered. She had not expected that she would be called into the execution of that for which she had thought and prayed so many months. Immediately she arose, saying: "But, ladies, I don't know how to do it; I don't know the Church, nor do I know how to begin." She was inexperienced, and there was no precedent in the Church to follow. It seemed an impossible task! But as she spoke she remembered the vow to God that she would do the work; she realized she must forget her fears and feeling of unfitness. The friends who had brought her there encouraged her, and the women of the Board volunteered to support her by their prayers and efforts; and again she said in deepest humility: "Yes, Lord, I will do it." She stepped out upon the promise that had come to her in the morning through Miss Holding and committed her work unto God.

Immediately after the Board voted to begin a training school, Mrs. Nathan Scarritt rose and made an offering of fifty dollars for the new enterprise. This was quickly followed by pledges of one hundred dollars each by Mrs. Adam Hendrix and Mrs. E. C. Dowdell and Mrs. Hayes; Mrs. J. B. Cobb and Mrs. C. H. Hall each promised fifty dollars, and Miss Mary Helm gave twenty-five; others pledged until about five hundred dollars were given. It was determined at this meeting that the regular funds of the Missionary Society could not be used for the new school, as they were needed for its operations in foreign fields. The Board directed that "*auxiliaries should not* make pledges for it, but that members should be urged to give liberally as *individuals*, and to make every effort to secure funds for the school. It was urged that this should be done at once and collections taken wherever available."

All moneys and names of donors were ordered sent direct to Miss Belle H. Bennett.

The evening after Miss Bennett's address to the Board Julia Dortch, the adopted daughter of Dr. Thompson, laid a silver dollar beside her plate at the dinner table, saying: "Miss Bennett, I have been waiting on the table since you came, and Auntie gave me a dollar for it. I heard you talk about how Jesus went about doing good and helping people when he was in the world and how we can do it too, and I want to do like Jesus did; I want to give you this dollar to help you build that training school." It was the first money actually paid in to the training school. "That dollar was seed planted that brought many hundreds of other dollars as I told the story of the little girl," was a frequent comment when Miss Bennett talked of these, her pioneer days in leadership. The second gift came to her immediately after the meeting in Little Rock, which also Miss Bennett called "seed corn that brought a bountiful harvest."

"While with my friends in St. Louis I was urged to visit one of the shut-in saints who had been confined to her bed a long time, a woman of wonderful prayer life. While in this upper chamber, I told her the story of Little Rock and my thought of a training school. Putting her hand feebly under her pillow she took out a small paper, and from it a five-dollar gold piece, saying: 'I have been waiting for the Lord to show me where he wanted me to put this, and now he has done it.'"

Robert Louis Stevenson's maxim, "Acts can be forgiven; not even God can forgive the hangerback," was ever an established principle with Miss Bennett. To recognize duty and to assume responsibility meant immediate action; and while she was keenly sensitive to her insufficiency for the untried task into which she had been thrust, she had not left Little Rock without some definite plan for her new employ. Her heart and thought turned to Misses Mette

and Harriet Thompson, and she thus tells of going to St. Louis, where they were then living:

"I stopped for a brief visit in St. Louis on my return journey home. This visit was to friends who were filled with the Holy Spirit and whose touch had meant everything in a spiritual way to me. I told them what had occurred at Little Rock and immediately the suggestion was made that this ought to go into the Church papers. With another great struggle, I wrote my first article for a *Methodist Advocate*, telling of the action of the Board in Little Rock and expressing something of what I felt was the great need for our missionary work. It was printed in the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*. The day after I reached my home in Kentucky two letters came to me through the mail; one of these was from a gentleman in Winston-Salem, N. C., saying he had read the article and inclosed a check for the proposed training school. The second letter was from Mrs. S. C. Trueheart, asking me to come the following day to Parkhill Camp Ground, as Mr. Sam Jones was there for a few days and she wanted me to meet and know him as well as attend a woman's missionary meeting to be held in the auditorium. I had never attended a camp meeting and was loath to go. I took the train for the camp ground, however, and was met at the gate by Mrs. Trueheart. A few moments later I was introduced to Mr. Jones. We talked of the woman's meeting which was to be held in the afternoon, and Mrs. Trueheart spoke to him of my appointment by the Board to establish a missionary training school. He was immediately interested and insisted that I was to tell the audience about it after he had spoken. The time came, and before a great audience Mr. Jones introduced Mrs. Trueheart and me, saying that I had something to tell them. As best I could, I again told the story of my own thoughts, God's call to me, and the resolution of the Woman's Board. I had scarcely finished when Mr. Jones said: 'Now I know that it's against the law to take up a collection on this camp ground, but this is the greatest thing I have heard of in the Church since I have been at work in it, and there is no law in the world against a collection taking up a man or woman, and we must have money; how are you going to take it, Miss Bennett?' My answer, as I re-

call was, 'I would like every woman and girl in Southern Methodism to have a part in it.' 'All right,' he said, 'I want to give five hundred dollars for Mrs. Jones, and pay it in a hundred dollars each year.' Instantly I answered, 'I will be glad to take it in that way. I will keep an account of every subscription, and notify all who give at the end of each year, for five years. I would rather have one dollar a year from every woman in the Church for five years than to have the full amount required to establish the institution given by one person.' Mr. Jones then said, 'Miss Bennett, you and Mrs. Trueheart sit down here on this platform and let the people bring you the money.' They came, men and women and children, giving from twenty-five cents a year up to ten dollars, and a few as much as twenty-five dollars a year for five years. Something more than a thousand dollars were pledged at this meeting."

The leadership of the Holy Spirit in this work was manifest in the enthusiastic, joyous giving wherever she made an appeal. At Cartersville, Ga., the home of Mr. Sam Jones, she attended the annual camp meeting shortly after the Parkhill Camp Ground experience, where a good subscription was given. Quoting again from Miss Bennett's words this enthusiasm is noted:

"Wherever I talked gifts of money or subscriptions were made. At Greenville and Meridian, Miss., as I sat on the edge of the platform, men and women came up, took off their watches and other jewelry, and with money and subscription notes to the amount of something more than three thousand dollars were poured into my lap. Thousands of dollars were given whenever I went to Mr. Jones's meetings. Churches also were visited, many of them at the invitation of the missionary women, where I was given a few moments after the sermon to speak to the audience. The gifts were not large, very few giving as much as five hundred dollars each."

It will easily be seen that Miss Bennett needed clerical help in a work that involved continuous correspondence and the keeping of records of multiplied varying amounts of

money through a period of five years. She was most ably assisted by Miss Lucile Crooke, of Richmond, Ky., whose personal interest and efficiency added greatly to the success of the movement. Miss Bennett's generous spirit could not be content with help like this without giving full credit, and throughout the Church Miss Crooke was known and honored for her service. Returned missionaries were Miss Bennett's heartiest supporters, and many of them confessed the unhappy handicaps they had suffered on the fields because of insufficient preparation. These stories Miss Bennett used with great effect in presenting the need for the institution for which she was working.

Gifts and subscriptions were made by many individuals who were not Methodists, because they were moved by her burning zeal and the importance of the work. Miss Lucia Burnam gives this account of a donation from a stranger: "While on her way to Kansas City, just previous to Scarritt's being located there, Miss Bennett got into conversation with a man on the train, to whom she told the story of the training school. He showed much interest in the plans of the school and asked many questions. Six months later she received a check for a thousand dollars from him for the new enterprise."

At the time Miss Bennett was raising this money she was tall and slender, with clear-cut features upon which intellect, humor, and sweetness of spiritual power played at will. Her unmistakable gentle breeding and dignity of bearing were great assets in her presentation of this cause; they disarmed prejudice and commanded respect. The effectiveness of her appeal also was due to clearness of thought, sincerity of conviction, and persuasive power which she possessed in unusual degree. She never argued, but took the vantage ground that her audience was party to her objective. Through all the years of her public service Miss Bennett seldom wrote her speeches; she made the subject

matter clear to her own mind and thought accurately, and was herself swayed by the response she rarely failed to receive from an audience. She never passed beyond certain nerve shock in public speaking, which was followed by sleepless, restless nights.

Within a few months after the Board appointed Miss Bennett as agent to establish the training school, the ministers of Louisville, Ky., invited the Board to locate the training school there, proffering to rent or secure a building; Dr. W. B. Palmore proposed Central College, Lexington, Mo., as the site and plant for the new school. The Trustees of Martha Washington College, Abingdon, Va., and Drs. Price and Kelley, of the College for Young Ladies in Nashville, Tenn., offered inducements to the Board to establish the school at their respective locations. Capt. and Mrs. J. E. Ray, of Asheville, N. C., offered their property near the city, and Dr. John W. Mathews invited the Board to locate the school at First Church parsonage, St. Louis, Mo. From Mrs. Isabella Hendrix, mother of Bishop Hendrix and one of the managers of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, came a letter reporting a conversation with Dr. Nathan Scarritt, of Kansas City, in which he proposed to give sufficient land and considerable money for the school if located in Kansas City. She urged Miss Bennett to come at once and discuss the matter with them. Miss Bennett made the trip, but she stopped at Louisville and also at St. Louis to investigate the propositions of these cities. She gives this account of her visit to Kansas City:

"I was met at the train by Dr. Scarritt and was a guest in his home for more than a week. On the Sabbath evening during that visit we walked over to the beautiful hill top overlooking the bluffs of the Missouri River and Kansas City, Kans. (he, Mrs. Scarritt, and myself), and he said to me: 'If you like this, I will give you here whatever you think is necessary for the es-

tablishment of a training school.' His splendid, gifted wife, the child of a missionary in India, was the inspiration of this gift, and always the strong supporter and friend of the Scarritt Bible and Training School after its establishment."

As a result of this visit Dr. Scarritt made the following proposition to the Board:

"I propose to give a plot of ground in East Melrose, which is an addition to Kansas City; said ground is on the corner of Woodward and Harris Streets, fronting South 200 feet on Harris Street and running back about 170 feet. I also propose to give \$25,000 in money on condition that the Woman's Board of Missions raise an additional \$25,000, all to be spent in erecting buildings and improving the ground, payments to be made on my part in the same amounts and as often as those made on the part of the Board.

If the Board accepts the proposition and makes the location here, I will give at once a bond for deed, and will give the Board a clear title when the said amount of \$50,000 shall have been spent in the buildings and improvements upon the grounds, provided this is done within five years."

The Board, at a called meeting early in November, 1889, accepted this generous proposition "with deepest gratitude and heartiest thanks." Dr. Scarritt was requested to "act as chairman of the Building Committee, composed of himself and Miss Bennett and a third person selected by themselves." Circular letters were sent to Conference Corresponding Secretaries urging them to present this new enterprise to their respective societies and Churches. At the request of the Board Mrs. M. D. Wightman, then Vice President, visited the Conferences of the Southeast and most ably assisted in creating an interest in the school. Before the end of that first year Miss Bennet and Mrs. Wightman had secured pledges that aggregated twenty-five thousand dollars, and much of it had been collected. Miss Bennett made a second visit to Kansas City to confer with the

Building Committee. They visited hospitals, schools, and other public buildings in various cities, inspecting types and plans. Finally plans for the building were begun.

The generous response to this venture in missionary training generated opposition, however, for the General Secretary and some other officials of the Board feared it would cripple the collections for the foreign work. Most of the promoters of the society were conservative Southern women, and some were opposed to locating the school so far west. This opposition became active when the bond for deed, framed in accordance with Miss Bennett's vision and Dr. and Mrs. Scarritt's desire, conveyed the property "to certain trustees for the location of a training school for home and foreign missionaries, for the purpose of educating and training missionaries for their work in both home and foreign fields." It was immediately declared that the constitution of the Woman's Missionary Society precluded the acceptance of the terms of the deed, since the objective of the society was "to enlist and unite the efforts of women and children in sending the gospel to the women and children in heathen lands." It was also claimed that the mere quorum of the Board that accepted Dr. Scarritt's gift was not authorized to do all the things which the Board could do in annual session.

Miss Bennett, Dr. Scarritt, and Miss Mary Helm contended that the Woman's Board had already infringed upon the letter of its law in establishing missions in Mexico, which was not a heathen land, and among the Indians in the United States. To offset this contention the fact was cited that the Woman's Board was subordinate to the General Board and therefore followed in the wake of its missions. The General Secretary of the Board, who was its legal agent, held tenaciously to this constitutional objection, in which she was upheld by legal advice and by one of the strongest bishops of the Church. The bishop's opposition

was phrased in the inquiry: "Who is this Miss Bennett anyway? By what authority is she going through the Church collecting money?" It is not strange that the spirit of this inexperienced leader should have suffered from such unexpected criticism and opposition. For six months the way seemed blocked for any progress in the cause to which she had unmistakably been called. Miss Harriet Thompson gives this graphic description of this serious situation:

"Miss Bennett's implicit obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit made that guidance effectual in her leadership. It was in connection with the Training School that one of her severest lessons in unswerving, heroic obedience was learned. When, in accordance with her appointment by the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, she had received valuable contributions from a number of the Methodist Churches, she found herself confronted with what seemed to her insurmountable difficulties. She visited my sister and me while in the midst of her perplexities; she said to us: 'I need prayer. It seems impossible for me to go forward, and yet I do not see how I can be honest if I abandon the work. I cannot return the money and the jewelry that have been given, for I have no list of many of the donors.' A group of devout Christians was asked to our home to unite in intercession for her. When the prayer service was ended, a deeply spiritual man said: 'Miss Bennett, do you feel sure that God called you to this work, when you undertook it?' She answered that she was very sure. 'Has he since called you to lay it down?' 'No,' was the reply. 'Circumstances have seemed to make it impossible, but I have no call from God to give it up.' 'Then you will have to go on with it until he tells you to stop.'

"She grasped the great principle of guidance, that *when once God has called a Christian to a post in his service, there must be no resigning until he himself in some way clearly indicates that the set task is done.* She went forward in the midst of what seemed insuperable hindrances and never faltered again, though some of her friends know how often she drank the bitter cup of trials, oppositions, and perplexities that

would have overwhelmed her but for God's gracious upholding."

These difficulties were adjusted by the General Conference at St. Louis in May, 1890, when it granted constitutional amendments which authorized the establishment of the Training School. This action was in response to a memorial from the Woman's Board of Missions, which was in annual session in St. Louis at the time. When it was known that the memorial had been granted, an executive session was called to determine whether to proceed with the work. Dr. Scarritt was invited to speak, and with great emotion he told the story of how God had led him to make this proposition to the women; he regretted the delay but renewed his offer. He was in feeble health and returned to Kansas City that night. Later in the meeting of the Board an overwhelming majority vote was cast to accept Dr. Scarritt's offer and to proceed with the erection of the building. Dr. Scarritt died a few days later, but not before Bishop Hendrix assured him: "It is all right with the Training School. The Woman's Board has voted that it shall go on." When the news of his death reached St. Louis the women promptly decided to call the institution the Scarritt Bible and Training School.

The Scarritt family generously and promptly carried out the purpose of their venerable father in this noble gift. Nearly a year after the General Conference Miss Bennett's fragmentary diary quotes from a letter received from Bishop Hendrix as follows: "The contract for the grading and excavation of the lots for the foundation of the Training School has been let, and the work will begin in the morning (April 28, 1891). Some friends, missionary ladies and others, will gather at the site and after a suitable prayer, the breaking of the ground will begin." Thank God that the work has begun.

The burden of the building fund having been lifted by

the happy response to her personal appeals, Miss Bennett turned her attention toward raising scholarships, lectureships, and endowment funds for the Training School, as the General Conference authorization did not include support of the institution. The June 24, 1891, entry of her diary says: "Wrote circular letter to Conference Secretaries asking them to begin scholarships and lectureships. Sue helped." For several years the Sunday School Board gave her permission to take collections for the endowment funds in the Sunday schools throughout the connection. One entry states: "At Easter time I wrote letters to the Sunday school superintendents throughout the Church asking that the collection be taken on that Sunday for the Training School. The mail going to the Sunday schools in all the churches was so heavy it had to be taken to the post office in a wheelbarrow." The response, however, was so splendid that thousands of dollars were collected.

In 1895 Miss Bennett and Mrs. Wightman finished the task of collecting moneys and turned over to the Board of Managers of the school \$52,394.58 for the endowment fund; this was augmented by \$20,000 given by the Conference Societies for the Belle Bennett Chair, which maintained the Bible Department. A joke she greatly loved to tell was the request of a dear old lady when visiting the Training School to "see that awful fine chair the women had bought for Miss Bennett." To these endowment funds were added \$55,000 for eleven lectureships. There were also nineteen endowed scholarships and a small student loan fund. From a mere money standpoint the work of this leader of women in her first public trust is most remarkable.

At the laying of the corner stone, July 2, 1891, Dr. W. H. Potter, Secretary of the Board of Missions, makes these comments on Miss Bennett's work:

"The originator of the enterprise was appointed Financial Agent to raise funds with which to start it.

There was not a dollar in the treasury; the mind of the Church respecting it was not known; a female fiscal agent with connectional relations was a thing unknown to the Church; yet with a heart strong in the Lord and in the conviction of a great duty, she went forward. Her success under such circumstances has been so phenomenal as to convict of blindness those who could not see that God was with her. Miss Belle H. Bennett, of Richmond, Ky., the Financial Agent, deserves and will receive the thanks of this and many generations for the inception and progress of this great work. No doubt she has already received the approval of her own conscience and her Lord. Miss Bennett has had many noble and worthy coadjutors, too many to be named here; but her singular strength of purpose, her simple faith, and quiet courage gave heart and hope to them all."

The Board of Managers of the Scarritt Bible and Training School elected Miss Laura Haygood principal at its meeting in 1891. It was thought that Miss Bennett would surely be the principal, but she refused utterly to consider it; she could not leave her mother permanently, and of her unfitness for the line of leadership which involved execution of detail she was most positive. Bishop Haygood earnestly desired that his sister should be recalled from China to become principal because she was unquestionably the best prepared woman in the Church for this venture in the field of education. He felt also she could not live long in China. Miss Bennett set her heart upon Miss Haygood's appointment by the Board. Miss Bennett's wonderful powers of leadership never removed from her that humanness which always endears the great to ordinary folk. It is with amusement and comfort that one finds her lapsing into feminine consolation in this entry in her diary, June 3, 1891: "I told Dr. Reid of Miss Haygood's election and had such a demonstration from him and Mrs. Trueheart that I could not help crying. Later on read my scripture lesson text for the day and was strengthened and comforted:

Isaiah 41: 10; Deuteronomy 31: 6; Psalm 145: 18, 19; Hebrews 13: 16."

The Woman's Board of Foreign Missions felt Miss Haygood could not be spared from China, and Mrs. D. H. McGavock strongly recommended Miss M. L. Gibson, the principal of a private high grade school in Covington, Ky. Bishop Hendrix and Miss Bennett visited Miss Gibson and induced her to give up the splendid work she was doing to accept the principalship of the Scarritt Bible and Training School. The Board of Managers of the new school met during the annual meeting of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions in 1892 and elected her with full approval of the society. The spiritual and refining influence of Miss Gibson was a great contribution to the student life of the school; it created an atmosphere of fidelity and beauty which remained with the missionaries long after they were anchored in their fields of service.

The acme of Miss Bennett's dream was reached when the building, finished, furnished in part, and free of debt, was ready for dedication, September 14, 1892. The feminine quality of her character is revealed in this description of her eagerness to inspect the building upon her arrival the night before the doors were thrown open to the public:

"We were without gas, owing to some misunderstanding about laying the pipes. We had a number of lamps, but not a sufficient number to dispel the darkness of the great halls. Miss Bennett could not wait until morning before viewing the building. We all followed in their wake as she and Miss Gibson made the grand tour; and although our lamp had a good Rochester burner, it made little impression on the darkness around, and our procession was rather ghostly."

The dedicatory exercises were held at Melrose Church, several blocks distant. At the close of this service Bishop Hendrix and Bishop Galloway led the audience to the

Memorial Chapel, where the ceremony of setting aside the new building for specific use was concluded. There, under the colorful gleam of the memorial window to Dr. Nathan Scarritt, Bishop Hendrix, President of the Board of Managers, received the keys from Judge E. L. Scarritt, of the Board of Trustees of the Scarritt Bible and Training School.

The School was formally opened on the day of dedication, with an enrollment of three students. Through the years that followed the opening of the school Miss Bennett refrained from having part in the internal management. For its large life she was ever insistent, and through the Board of Managers, of which she was Vice President, she urged and planned for enlargement when there was need of advancement.

The members of the Woman's Board of Home Missions can never forget her challenge to their loyalty at the Board meeting in 1901, when she turned to Miss Emily Allen (now Mrs. Siler) and said abruptly in the midst of some platform utterance: "Miss Emily Allen, I want you to go to Scarritt to teach Christian Sociology." She had not consulted the principal of the school nor had she mentioned the subject to Miss Allen. To the thoughtful the rapid economic development of the South was creating a demand for changed methods of the Church's approach to segregated industrial communities. In her hours of waiting before God Miss Bennett had been shown that a closer knowledge of the problems of human society and technical instruction in helping to relieve or reconstruct social conditions was of prime importance to the women who were to lead in religious work. She believed this instruction might be given through the newly developing science of sociology. The Scarritt Bible and Training School was the property of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, and its appeal had been more directly to students for foreign missions, but with a new



SCARRITT BIBLE AND TRAINING SCHOOL, KANSAS CITY, MO.



South unfolding before her eyes she saw clearly that missionaries for the home field must be called and also have special preparation. This apparently impulsive statement to Miss Allen was her method of calling the Woman's Board of Home Missions into coöperation in the management and support of the Training School. This challenge resulted in the adoption of a resolution by the Board at that meeting, which authorized the establishment of a chair of sociology at the Scarritt Bible and Training School upon the consent of the management of the school. This department became one of vital importance to students for both home and foreign fields.

Courses of instruction varied with the developments of years. Miss Bennett's insistence upon the need of historical and spiritual understanding of the Bible and the knowledge of its use in personal work gave emphasis to the Biblical Department. Church history, history of missions, religious pedagogy, methods of work, phonetics, hymnology, and bookkeeping were included in the curriculum. A small hospital furnished opportunity for the training of nurses at one period, but the difficulty of financing it, because it was so small, led to its discontinuance in 1905. Miss Bennett and Mrs. Lucy Ryder Meyer, pioneers in building schools for training missionaries, saw their institutions duplicated by seventy-two other denominational training schools in less than twenty-five years.

In the first thirty years after the service flag was hoisted over Scarritt Bible and Training School more than a thousand women went out from its walls to all parts of the world, many of them skilled workmen for the Lord. It was Miss Bennett's first realized vision; and while God opened her eyes to others which she as splendidly accomplished, she cared for no other institution or enterprise so tenderly. She loved Scarritt with the jealous care of a fond mother, for it was purchased with the travail of her

soul. She was wont to say of this institution: "There were days when I longed for death to relieve me of the responsibility of persuading the Church that missionaries needed training for their work. I was as literally driven of the Holy Spirit to establish the Training School as was Paul into Macedonia."

## CHAPTER IV

### A SACRED HERITAGE

THE persons in Southern Methodism who first saw the need of its womanhood in organized connectional work for the homeland were Bishop R. K. Hargrove and Dr. David Morton, first Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Church Extension. On their recommendation a Woman's Department of Church Extension was created by the General Conference, May 21, 1886, for the purpose of enlisting the women to raise moneys to build parsonages on the frontiers and in needy sections of the older Conferences. Miss Lucinda Helm was appointed Secretary of this new department to work through Conference Corresponding Secretaries in organizing societies throughout the connections.

At the first annual session of the Kentucky Conference after the creation of this Woman's Department of the Board of Church Extension, Miss Sue A. Bennett was appointed Corresponding Secretary for the Conference. The regulations for this new organization were meager, and its development in the Conferences depended upon the initiative and energy of the Corresponding Secretary. The women of the Church at that time had limited experience in connectional work, and their interest had so centered upon the spiritual destitution of darker nations that they were loath to undertake what seemed, superficially, an unnecessary task in the homeland.

Miss Sue Bennett entered upon her new task with great enthusiasm, and the records show that she was very successful in creating a following for this new womans' work. Her painstaking investigations concerning the need of parsonages within her own Conference's bounds brought to

her attention several counties without Churches of any denomination and large areas in the mountains where dense ignorance prevailed. She soon gained the hearty support of the preachers, whose interest in her work is revealed by Rev. C. J. Nugent's account in the *Christian Advocate* (Nashville) of her report at the Kentucky Conference in 1890: "Miss Sue Bennett addressed the Conference on the Woman's Church Extension work, especially as to parsonages, in a chaste and beautiful style, which captured the audience. No speech delivered during the session so completely held the attention of the hearers." The Lexington *Leader*, the secular paper where the Conference was held, also reported her address with these comments:

"One of the most interesting addresses of the session was made this morning by Miss Sue Bennett, of White Hall. She is Secretary of the Woman's Department of Church Extension. Miss Bennett pleaded for assistance in the work of evangelizing the mountain counties of this State, especially in the work of building parsonages. The picture she drew of the ignorance pervading these districts was startling in its revelations. Her voice is of a timbre as rare as it is sweet, and the sensation felt at the close of her remarks was similar to that experienced by one awakening from some delightful dream."

Notwithstanding the difficulties of getting this work launched, the women through their parsonage grants acquired information concerning conditions in the United States which so challenged them to larger activity that they could not be satisfied to work through the meager outlet furnished by the Woman's Department of Church Extension. Dr. David Morton sympathized with their desire for greater liberty of action and directed the attention of the General Conference of 1890 to the "broad and uncultivated field of Christian enterprise within the bounds of the Church," which called for enlargement of the scope of woman's work. "The Woman's Parsonage and Home Mis-

sion Society," as a Department of the Board of Church Extension, resulted, and the women and children were to be united in "procuring homes for itinerant preachers and otherwise aiding the cause of Christ." The activities of the Society were directed by twelve women, known as the Central Committee, in coöperation with the Church Extension Board. Miss Sue Bennett was chosen as one of these twelve women, and with characteristic Tevis-Bennett faith in the power of Christian education she promptly interpreted the phrase "otherwise aiding the cause of Christ," as meaning the women were authorized to build schools in destitute mountain sections. Immediately she pleaded for the establishment of a school in the Southeastern Kentucky mountains and began gathering funds for this cause.

It will be noted that the call of the Church to Miss Sue Bennett to take up the burden of parsonage building antedated the call of her younger sister to connectional Church service by three years, but the "burden of vision" of the need of schools for backward peoples of the older sister and that of the need of specialized training for missionaries and Christian workers of the younger, were simultaneous. Both of these Bennett women were devoted to their God-given tasks and toiled with sympathetic appreciation and understanding each of the other's faith and obedience.

But suddenly, in 1892, the silver cord of Miss Sue's life was broken, and her efforts for these people of the mountains were cut short by her untimely death. Miss Belle Bennett was out in the field raising the endowment of the Scarritt Bible and Training School when this great sorrow of separation from her sister came into her life. Miss Sue had been her inspiration and adviser through the years, and all human prop seemed broken. But in faith sublime, with a spirit like that of the Norwegian poet, she came to realize that

"Support may break in pieces,  
But you shall see  
The end will be  
Your need of crutches ceases.  
'Tis clear  
Whom God makes lonely  
To him he comes more near."

With strength beyond her own she gathered the threads of Miss Sue's life purposes and determined to carry to full fruition her ardent desire for educational opportunity for the mountain boys and girls in Southeastern Kentucky and at the same time complete her own task of raising the endowment for the Training School. She was elected to succeed Miss Sue on the Central Committee at its annual meeting a few weeks after her death. The records contain this paragraph:

"The subject of the evangelization of the mountains of Kentucky and West Virginia attracted much attention, and the committee determined, with God's help, during the year to endeavor to raise funds for a mission in the mountains to be known as the 'Sue Bennett Memorial.' Miss Sue Bennett, as Secretary of the Kentucky Conference, was planning the mission when our Father called her home. Miss Belle Bennett subscribed to this memorial mission \$500. Other large gifts are expected from those interested in that most needy field."

The women of the Kentucky Conference, under the leadership of Mrs. Clara Poynter, rallied to the Sue Bennett Memorial and pledged seven thousand five hundred dollars as a special offering for it at the succeeding Conference Society meeting. The minutes of the Central Committee contained the announcement in 1893 that "the school in the mountains of Kentucky will become a fact," and Miss Belle Bennett was appointed Superintendent of Mountain Work.

With the energy that distinguished her every assumption

of responsibility Miss Bennett set about getting expert information concerning the most desirable location for this school. A site was offered at Manchester, but later withdrawn, for sufficient reason. She called to her assistance Rev. J. J. Dickey, who had established and maintained a school for ten years at Jackson, Ky., which later became an adjunct of Central University of the Presbyterian Church. He was present at the annual meeting of the Kentucky Conference Society at Richmond in 1894. Five thousand dollars had already been collected by the Kentucky women, and they were eager to begin work, but Mr. Dickey persuaded them to enlarge their plans and to strive to enlist the people of some mountain county seat in a larger enterprise than they had conceived. He induced Miss Bennett to visit London, easily accessible for a school to a number of counties. Miss Bennett then determined to go through the mountain section herself that she might know personally the conditions and opportunities of peoples she would help. Mr. Dickey, who knew more of that country than any other person, went with her to help make these investigations. His account of this visit reads:

"We made the trip through the mountains, touching nine county seats. Dr. Lambuth, Mrs. Morgan, of Richmond, as traveling companion for Miss Bennett, myself, and the driver of the jolt wagon constituted the party. We held meetings in each county seat except Bell and Knox. Miss Bennet financed the trip. Her object was to show the mountains to Dr. Lambuth and thereby enlist his interest and coöperation. He was Missionary Secretary at that time."

It was on this journey that Miss Bennett overheard the conversation between her companion and the mountain woman which ever afterwards furnished an axiom for home-mission women. They were spending the night in a mountain cove cabin where there was a large family of

children. There were no openings in the house save the door, which appalled the town lady.

"Why don't you have windows in your house?" she inquired.

"Because we'uns don' want no varments putt'n the'r heads in the holes."

"But can't you put glass in the holes?"

"How'd we'uns get it up here?"

"Couldn't you bring it up on horseback?"

"Look a' here, stranger," came the rejoinder, "them what hain't never had nothin' don' miss it when they hain't got nothin'."

This mountain philosophy satisfied the cove cabin dweller and explained why the peoples of the hills were more than a century behind the rest of the world.

As a result of Miss Bennett's trip the citizens of London, Laurel County, Ky., offered to put \$20,000 into a site and building for the school provided the Woman's Parsonage and Home Mission Society would raise an endowment of \$20,000 for its maintenance. This proposition was accepted by the Central Committee, and it was agreed to "appropriate \$1,300 yearly, being six and one-half per cent of the endowment, until the full endowment could be raised." It then became Miss Bennett's work to help raise these funds. From her "Line a Day" of March 27, 1895, is taken this statement, which shows her at work for this child of her sister's heart: "Made my first address on mountain work at Hopkinsville, Ky. Talked forty minutes tolerably well. Took no collection, which was a mistake."

Miss Bennett wrote very little for the press, but her great concern for the establishment of this school drove her to her desk and pen, where she poured out her heart in an earnest appeal to the Church to recognize its obligation to mountain people. This appeal, published in the *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), April 4, 1895, was the longest com-

munication she ever sent to any paper. It was fruitful in the general interest created in this work, and also touched many who responded with gifts of money.

At Miss Bennett's instance Rev. J. J. Dickey threw himself into this new enterprise. Of him she wrote: "The life and influence of this one godly man has made itself felt as a revolutionizing force throughout the entire surrounding country." For a year he made monthly visits from his home two hundred miles away to help the people of London raise their subscription. A campus of twenty-two acres on a most commanding site was purchased. Of his own volition Mr. Dickey sold out his business in Jackson and moved to London, where he remained during the erection of the beautiful building. On June 25, 1896, the corner stone was laid by Bishop E. R. Hendrix in the presence of a large assemblage of deeply interested people. The new building was not ready for occupancy when the school opened, according to advertisement, on January 2, 1897. An old building in London, known as the Laurel County Seminary, was rented, and the work began with a faculty of three and an enrollment of seventy-five. Within five months two hundred and ten students from four adjoining counties responded to roll call. The beautiful new brick building, costing twelve thousand dollars, was dedicated and ready for service the next fall. It provided classroom facility for three hundred students. Because of the poverty of this mountain area cheap boarding arrangements were imperative. A system of cottages was adopted which afforded accommodations for eight, ten, or twelve persons, who brought their furnishings and provisions from their homes, and thus lived on the campus at the minimum cost. Often a mother or older sister took a cottage, paying a dollar per month for rent, and by being housekeeper or house-mother cared for as large a group as the Principal would permit. This cottage plan for boarding students met with

hearty approval wheresoever Miss Bennett presented it, and promptly eight such buildings, built by different Conferences or individual families, dotted the campus. A dormitory for girls, named in honor of Miss Lucinda Helm, was soon erected. Miss Belle Bennett's power of persuasion brought to the assistance of the school not only the women of the Parsonage and Home Mission Society, whose property the school became, but secured gifts from persons in no wise related to the institution or the organization back of it. Her reports to the Central Committee those first years tell of gifts of lumber for building from one not a Methodist; of chairs sufficient to seat the school purchased at less than cost through the influence of a State official; of classrooms furnished and equipped by personal donations. Small legacies, the beginning of a worth-while library, and other contributions for the welfare of the institution are noted in the annals of the years. Especially did she stress the loyalty of the Kentucky women in these reports, for she felt the upkeep and ongoing of the school was their responsibility. How deeply seated in the affections of the people the school became was revealed by accounts of personal ministry like that of Rev. J. J. Dickey and Dr. George Young, who came fifty miles each week to give Bible lessons to earnest students.

Miss Bennett was insistent that no system of helpfulness should be extended that would lessen the splendid spirit of independence which characterized mountain peoples; therefore all pupils were required to pay some tuition, and when one was provided with a scholarship he made a note for repayment of the value the loan represented. Courses of study were planned which were especially adapted to the needs of the student body.

Miss Bennett's great interest centered about the preparation of teachers for the small schools back in the coves, and from the beginning a department, known as the "Normal

Course," for training them was stressed. She likewise emphasized the evangelistic influence of the school, for it was Christian education for which she strove. To this end she was most particular in selecting the Principal and faculty. Prof. J. C. Lewis, graduate of Bristol University, England, "a Christian scholar and educator in the best sense of the term," was chosen Principal. For nineteen years he and his godly wife were truly "workfellows" with Miss Bennett in the beautiful ministry of Sue Bennett Memorial School.

Educators have claimed it requires five years to establish a school and prove its value to a community. A glance through the records of the five years, from the eventful opening of Sue Bennett Memorial School in 1897 to 1902, reveals the little plant sending down deep roots whence sprang buildings, equipment, and character development beyond the most sanguine expectation of its promoters.

The Twentieth Century Educational Campaign of the Church brought money for building the Ellen Burdette Home, the residence of the Principal, and later a Memorial Hall, a boy's dormitory built by friends in loving memory of personal relations through Miss Bennett's appeals, tell the story of the influence of her devotion.

The establishment of this dream-child of her older sister Miss Bennett accepted as a sacred heritage, and to its progress, from breaking soil for the first building to the full development of an institution far greater than she conceived, she contributed unremitting toil and continuous thought. From the selection of the first Principal and faculty to those of later years, and to every student who bore the impress of Sue Bennett Memorial School, she gave a wealth of love. The work was difficult by nature, and at first the Society was too poor to maintain the plant at the cost the opportunity demanded. In her fragmentary journals there are sentences that picture her constant care.

January 12, 1898, she wrote, "A sleepless night over London debt," and again, "January 13, 1898 I wrote St. Louis, Mount Carmel, Maysville for money for the London school." A later entry says: "January 3, 1899, Professor Lewis came after supper, and we sat until 11 P.M., going over unpaid bills—\$1,590 debts"; and on February 27, 1899, she wrote, "I made a note to Mary for \$1,588 for debt on London School." Continuously until 1901 she was burdened with these financial problems, often making up deficits herself. And there were vexing problems like tornadoes that twice unroofed buildings, and there were difficulties in convincing the boys of the mountains that manual labor is not degrading. Continuous anxieties concerning the administration of the school came to her so long as she remained Superintendent of Mountain Work.

Thirty years passed between the going home of the two Bennett sisters, and they were years that witnessed great development in this school for mountain youth. Thousands of students went from her halls out into the great, wide world to bless and instruct thousands more. The property increased in value, and was reckoned at \$240,000, while the growth of the Society permitted an annual appropriation for maintenance which approached the equivalent of an endowment of \$300,000. Curriculums covering Model, High, Normal, Music and Business Schools were furnished, each school carrying economic and domestic sciences most needed in remote districts. In the first decade of 1900 the State of Kentucky enacted a law requiring the establishment of high schools in every county. In 1910 Laurel County correlated its high school with Sue Bennett Memorial School, using the campus and faculty, furnishing an additional teacher and placing the whole under the supervision and direction of the principal, Prof. J. C. Lewis. The State now issues certificates to students of the school who complete all its required courses. On the thirtieth anniversary

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MISS SUE A. BENNETT

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of the opening of the school four hundred and seventy-five students were enrolled.

The burdens Miss Bennett bore were forgotten as she counted the men and women who had gone from Sue Bennett Memorial School to universities and places of larger preparation and thence to high and honorable position; or those who had become soldiers of the Cross in foreign fields; teachers in many Southern States; money-making business men; earnest-hearted homemakers, wives, and mothers; and the host who took their lighted torches back to the shut-away homes of the mountains. With all her heart she believed the office of the school is not to impart knowledge or increase the earning capacity of the individual, but to develop, enrich, and mature his personality that he may become a useful member of society. For this reason she loved to tell that the first graduate, who served this government in distant fields, wrote her he had "not forgotten the God he found at Sue Bennett and was at work for him as Superintendent of the First Sunday school over there." Always rejoicing in the prowess of woman, she found more than satisfaction in the memory of one daughter of the school who met a committee from the Kentucky Woman's Clubs with four horses at the railroad station and personally conducted the women on a tour of inspection of mountain-cove schools. The school she herself was teaching was so far beyond the others in character and work that the prize they came to award went unchallenged to her. Miss Bennett liked to tell of the circuit court judge who secured pardon for a father imprisoned for running a "moonshine still," because of the impression made by the deportment and original speech of his son, who was valedictorian at a graduating exercise at Sue Bennett which he chanced to attend. A son of that development could make a man of his father, the judge contended. These are but

samples of many facts that prove how well the school fulfilled its mission.

If this heritage from her sister was one of toil and burden, it was no less one of high privilege to Belle Harris Bennett, for it brought to her the priceless joy of giving truth and light to a backward people "that they may have life and may have it abundantly."

## CHAPTER V

### CALLED TO HOME MISSION FIELDS

MISS BENNETT was elected President of the Woman's Parsonage and Home Mission Society April 28, 1896, ten years after its organization. Its progress had been very slow because of a strange apathy in the Church to organized home missions and the opposition of some members of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. The prejudice to this organization is clearly stated by Mrs. J. D. Hammond, who was among the first women of the Church to rally to its support:

"When the home mission work of the Church struggled toward organization, the majority of our preachers, at least one of the bishops, and most of our women considered it disloyal to the foreign field to take part in the work. Our best women felt that the cause of foreign missions was in danger, and they honestly and earnestly labored with the home mission group to cease their activities.

"Miss Bennett was already the best known woman in the Church. Her ability, her devotion, her high social position, marked her a leader. Every one regarded her as the coming woman of the foreign work. Yet she was one of the first to lead in the home mission work also. I will never forget our first meeting. We talked of the two aspects of the one work; and she told me many women in the foreign and many in the home field felt that she should give up her foreign work now as a matter of loyalty. 'And that is one thing I never will do,' she said. 'I intend to stay in both; and some day our women will see that none of us can afford to do anything else.'"

The operations of the organization were directed by twelve women known as the Central Committee, which met annually in connection with the Board of Church Extension

in Louisville, Ky. The sessions were held in the beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. George Kendrick, where a splendid hospitality was always extended. The spirit of patience and faith and fellowship of this group amidst the discouragements that beset those pioneer days was heroic. Of these meetings Mrs. Emily Allen Siler wrote: "The spirit of our early corps was born of unceasing prayer. I remember when Miss Bennett first came to us, after Miss Sue's sudden going, that in the parlor of Mrs. Kendrick's home we spent hours on our knees asking God for help in the midst of these strange oppositions. As we drew close to God, he drew us close to one another."

From these conferences the women filed into the rooms of the Church Extension Board to report their work. It is difficult to imagine a more distasteful proceeding for Miss Bennett's proud, democratic spirit. The patronizing spirit manifest in the terms "the good women," "the elect ladies," frequently used by the men in commendation of their work, were highly offensive to her. She also resented the insinuation, by this relation to the Church Extension Board, that the women were unequal to the responsibility of conducting their own work. Again the small body of the Central Committee was contrary to her ideas of democracy, for above everything she despised concentration of power in the hands of a few men and women. A woman of her vision, whose nature was so independent, could not have subjected herself to this irritation of spirit had she not realized a plea to the next General Conference, two years off, could make the women free to follow larger policies in a more democratic way. The Central Committee was too small to command the attention of the Church, and to offset this handicap conventions were called every year in different cities, to which representatives from the various Conferences were invited to consider some phase of needed work in the homeland. They were purely educative and inspira-

tional and had no power to initiate work or to formulate plans.

The General Conference of 1898 acceded to the wish of the women and authorized the Woman's Home Mission Society to be governed by the Woman's Board, composed of officers and corresponding secretaries from each Conference Society. Corresponding Secretaries from twenty Conferences met in Dallas, Tex., April 20, 1899, to formally organize the new society. Miss Bennett's journal for this date gives the story of the meeting: "We spent the forenoon dissolving the old Central Committee. Permanent officers were elected for four years. With kind words and waving handkerchiefs I was made President, Miss Emily Allen Recording Secretary, Mrs. R. K. Hargrove General Secretary, and all the other old officers were elected. Dear Mary Helm is such a strong tower! Large audiences."

Miss Bennett was finishing her work as Agent for the Scarritt Bible and Training School and also building the Sue Bennett Memorial School during the first years of her presidency of the Society. Her official relation began with a visit to the Pacific Coast in company with Bishop and Mrs. R. K. Hargrove. Mrs. Hargrove was General Secretary of the organization at that time. They became interested in Oriental immigration while on the coast, and urged the women of the local Churches to make first evangelistic approaches by teaching these newcomers the English language. A number of night schools conducted by volunteers were started in California which later were enlarged and became connectional institutions of the Woman's Board of Home Missions. In after years they came to fruitage in splendidly organized Korean and Japanese Southern Methodist Churches.

Headquarters of the Board were moved to Nashville, Tenn., and the executive offices located in the home of Bishop and Mrs. Hargrove. Miss Bennett was entertained

in this delightful home when visiting Nashville in the interest of the work so long as Mrs. Hargrove held office. She resigned because of failing health in 1900 and was succeeded by Mrs. R. W. MacDonell, of Macon, Ga.

From the day when Miss Bennett became President of this organized woman's work until her death in 1922, her "Line a Day" journals tell of continuous reading of biographies of great statesmen and makers of the world's history; of religious leaders like St. Francis of Assisi and Fletcher; and the ever growing number of books of sociology. She also read the outstanding fiction of the day that she might keep abreast of the trend of thought of the social world of her own times. These records tell of journeys oft, and numerous addresses, frequently as many as three or four a day, to all kinds of meetings and clubs. One gains an idea of the time thus given to encouraging the women of the Church and inspiring them with faith in the work from this paragraph in her annual address to the Board in 1906:

"During the last calendar year your chairman was seven months in the field; and had her physical strength been equal to it she might have filled twice seven, answering legitimate calls and doing that which ought to be done for the best good of the cause. You need a larger Executive Committee and more women in that Committee who can give their undivided time to field and office work."

There was no constructive program in the Church at the beginning of the twentieth century which seemed adequate to arrest its attention and focus it upon the social wrongs of the day. Miss Bennett conceived a great educational scheme by which its womanhood might be aroused to Christ's principles of social justice and through their influence work like leaven in the Church. To her this was but obedience to God's law of love and the underlying principle of home missions; it established man's relation

to man as brothers and sons of a common loving Father. On her missionary journeys, whenever it was possible, it became her habit to stop for rest in the home of the General Secretary in Nashville, Tenn. On these occasions she, Miss Mary Helm, and Mrs. MacDonell gave days to intensive study of reports of labor and commerce and immigration. They studied histories of similar condition in other countries and sought to learn what other religious and welfare organizations were doing for conservation of human personality in character and spiritual values. They diligently

“Watched to ease the burden of the world,  
Laborously tracing what must be,  
And what may yet better be.”

These days of study were called the “Meetings of the Triumvirate” by the MacDonell household. Facts gathered then were tabulated and sent out to the Woman’s Societies through the columns of *Our Homes*, the organ of the Board, leaflets, charts, and newspaper paragraphs. Institutes were held where local coöperation made them possible and effective. Great speakers who had living messages were engaged for these institutes as a part of Miss Bennett’s plan for the social education of the Church. Years before the Church was aroused to social activity the expressions “sociological investigation” and “social service” were familiar terms in the vocabulary of home mission women. Plans for schools for mountaineers, dependents, delinquents, Negroes, and foreign-born folk; city settlement work for native, foreign, and Negro industrial communities, and co-operative homes for young wage earners evolved from these investigations. Like a great general she trusted her fellow-workers to develop her plans and unfailingly gave credit of accomplishment to the splendid women with whom she labored. For her to have spent herself in routine work or to have handicapped her grasp of world issues with the

grind of details would have been a tragic loss to the Church and to the world.

The motive of Miss Bennett's missionary zeal was the building of God's victorious kingdom on earth. She sought to show the way of regeneration through Christ to the individual and fought to conquer the evil that clogs the salvation of society. "Eternal life for the individual, the kingdom of God for humanity," was the slogan of her life. For this reason she led the women of the Church in much endeavor for human betterment, not then classed as religious work. This attitude to the close relation of the human body and soul was demonstrated when she visited the beautiful Congressional Library in Washington in 1896 while it was under construction. A group of missionary women accompanied her, and one of zealot spirit exclaimed: "Think of how many souls could be saved in heathen lands by the money invested in this building!" "Think of how many mouths have been fed with money earned in honest toil here!" was Miss Bennett's quick retort. To have mentioned the ethical value to the nation of the great beauty of this building would have been lost upon that individual.

Miss Bennett was reasonably proud of the prowess of the women of the Church whose moneys and boxes of goods sent through the Supply Department helped build and hold pastorates, which came into being almost overnight, like that at Lawton, Okla., when the territories of the West passed into Statehood. More than three thousand parsonages throughout the bounds of the Church, and many preachers provided with boxes of supplies while rendering pioneer service or testing their adaptability to the Methodist itinerant system, attest the value of this branch of the woman's work. With the loyalty of a great nature she unfailingly gave credit to those who preceded her in office by stating: "More parsonages were built in the first five

years of this Society than in the first fifty years of American Methodism."

Miss Bennett was twenty years ahead of her times when she foresaw the inevitable massing of unskilled laborers, alien peoples, and fortune seekers in the cities of the country as they followed in the wake of modern invention and industrial and commercial changes. Like a prophet of old she cried aloud to the Churches in the South: "Make ready against the forces of evil that must crowd these marts of human life." She foresaw that nothing short of aggressive religious enthusiasm could cope with issues generated by these factors, and she believed that a Church alive to the ethics of Jesus had the power of regenerating municipal and commercial control of human relationships. Only one-third of the population of the United States lived in the cities when she first called attention to these facts, and twenty years later the census of 1920 revealed more than half as urban dwellers. The increase of the city population in ten years (1910-1920) outstripped the total growth of the nation during the same period.

In 1893, when Miss Bennett first became a member of the Central Committee, the Parsonage and Home Mission Society held a conference on "City Evangelism" in St. Louis, and later plans were devised for uniting the women of local Methodist Churches in some form of city work. A half dozen cities organized City Mission Boards and employed local, earnest-hearted but untrained women. The results of these ventures were unsatisfactory, since occasional friendly visitors could not materially affect the family or community life.

Miss Bennett's vision was that of large central institutions with men and women conducting various educational, friendly, and evangelistic forms of service as the effective means of reaching the unchurched and lonely masses. But the Church was not ready, and the part which women alone

might play seemed more easily wrought through neighborly friendship in settlement homes, where trained workers, illuminated with God's love, might live and share the experiences of the neighborhood. By no means did Miss Bennett or the women of the Board of Home Missions deem this measure sufficient for the demand, but it was a beginning; it was establishing a point of contact for the Church with foreign-born people, or indifferent native Americans, or that hardest of all people to touch with social justice, "our brother in black."

In Miss Bennett's itineraries through the Church her appeals for the establishment of these social centers were constant. Her journal of 1898 states concerning a visit to Nashville: "Went to the meeting of the City Mission Board; met with the Committee first and gave them a talk on Settlement work; then met the full Board."

This conception of the Church maintaining settlement houses was new; indeed, at that time there was but one social settlement in the South. It was a bold suggestion, for there were not then three available women in the Church trained for such work. It was not until the fall of 1901, while Miss Bennett and Miss Helm were abroad, that this dream of social evangelism began to come true. The Nashville City Mission Board was wedded to the old thought of salvaging human wreckage in "doors of hope," and was loath to believe itself equal to a larger, more constructive program for conservation of youth or for building upon the latent possibilities of industrial community life. A sudden property question in which the aid of the General Secretary was invoked precipitated a situation which arrested its rescue program, and the City Board was induced to establish a settlement house in South Nashville, which was in full operation when Miss Bennett and Miss Helm returned. Miss Minerva Clyce (later Mrs. J. E. McCulloch) was appointed head resident, which was evidence of God's approval of

this social religious venture, for her cheerful spirit, deep consecration, and large gifts of initiative fitted her for the endless experiments such a new enterprise entailed. The loyalty of the Nashville City Mission Board enabled the Woman's Board of Home Missions to use that settlement as an example for other cities.

A definite City Mission program in Kansas City, Mo., was most important, as it was there the missionaries and deaconesses had their social training while attending Scarritt Bible and Training School. When the City Mission Board was organized, Miss Bennett proceeded to raise the three hundred dollars sufficient to initiate the day nursery, the first feature of work. By continuous appeals amounts totaling two hundred dollars were pledged, when a rich woman in the congregation arose, saying: "Miss Bennett, if you will stop, I will give the other hundred." From this small beginning Miss Bennett realized a larger dream of city evangelization, for the small day nursery eventuated in the beautiful, very modern Institutional Church on Admiral and Holmes Boulevards, and the City Mission Board's collections increased until it was far easier to raise the more than fourteen thousand dollars for the maintenance of the Woman's Department of the Church than it was to get that first three hundred. The young pastor of the Mission Church where the fruits of the woman's labors were garnered in its first years was the agent for raising the moneys to establish this Institutional Church. He claimed that he caught Miss Bennett's vision of a great plant of social evangelism while traveling abroad in 1901, when he met and studied with her and Miss Helm the great missions of London.

The wisdom of this program for the conservation of youth and evangelizing the city slums appealed to the womanhood of the Church, and with an enthusiasm almost

beyond compare they adopted it, as is shown in Miss Bennett's annual address to the Board in 1903:

"The advance in organized mission work during the past year has been phenomenal. Women in cities, towns, and villages seem to have suddenly awakened to the fact that enough time had been spent in talking and writing of the great need of evangelizing the cities, of the dangers from congested slums and the ignorant, degraded immigrant and are reaching out for work as though just realizing that *now* is God's accepted time for the redemption of the masses. Twelve City Mission Boards are already affiliated with this Board, and in many other places the women are eager to organize."

This settlement movement met with severe criticism from the preachers and some of the connectional officers. "It isn't evangelistic," said some. "You are treating symptoms, not disease," said others. "Churches, schools, and orphanages are real Church work, not these playhouses for the women," said one high official. A great part of the objection sprang from the term "settlement house," which stood for the betterment work in college settlements. Miss Bennett realized that renaming the plants would change the attitude of mind and in her annual address in 1906, in this statesmanlike manner, recommended the change:

"While studying methods of work in Chicago and New York we learned that the term Settlement Home or House was in decided disfavor among Church people in those sections. It was not difficult to find the cause. The Social Settlement preceded the Christian or Gospel Settlement, both in England and America, verifying the scriptural truth again that the 'children of this world are wiser in their day and generation than are the children of light.'

"A splendid humanitarian work has been done by this social agency. Money has been given for the support of settlements without stint, and men and women of education and culture have given their time and life and worldly store to the work done in them. But they are as entirely separated from the Church and

Church influences as are the public schools or city hospitals. The residents make no pretense of being religious teachers; indeed, as a rule, they exclude all forms of worship or religious teaching. Yet to these social settlements the term 'settlement' rightfully belongs, and the Churches are recognizing this and are adopting other names. The Presbyterians do their settlement work in down-town Church House; the Episcopalians in the Parish House. We are in the infancy of our city mission work. Let us take a distinctive name: Epworth Community House, Wesley Community House, or Methodist Community House. Let us have our own name and do not let us grow up a 'settlement' or a 'mission.'"

The name Wesley Community House was adopted for white neighborhoods and later Bethlehem House for Negro districts. Miss Bennett lived to see more than forty institutions for social religious work, varying in size and name, as part of the woman's work in the home field and many others in the Orient and in Latin America. She also saw these incarnations of the Christian spirit duplicated by various industrial corporations in the South because they learned their human value from the Wesley Community Houses.

Coöperative Homes for young, small wage earning women became a part of the city mission program. Miss Bennett counted these one of God's agencies for preservation of character values for young girls who, as by-products of the twentieth century economic system, are thrust out into the world as bread winners. The danger that such institutions might hinder the securing of just living wages was recognized, and deaconesses and missionaries charged with such work were constantly urged to exercise care concerning the places of business where the girls were employed. The beautiful Mary Elizabeth Inn, in San Francisco, gift of Mrs. L. H. Glide in memory of her mother, and the gift of the Houston Young Woman's Coöperative

Home by the business men of Houston, Tex., to the women of the Church, attest the world's estimate of the value of these works of love. A half dozen such homes, erected in as many Southern cities, proclaimed the socialized spirit of the women who worked with Miss Bennett in these home fields.

Miss Bennett realized that this program of city missions could not go forward unless a large number of trained women volunteered for the work. Hitherto the Church had made no special call for young women to devote their lives to this field of human interest, and there were few who were ready for the service. Under her leadership the Woman's Board of Home Missions determined to send a memorial to the General Conference in 1902, calling attention to this manifest need and asking for the creation of the office of deaconess in the Church. It was felt that this class of workers would be more effective in their ministration if they should be set apart by the Church and work under the authority and appointment of a Deaconess Board. Miss Bennett and Miss Mary Helm threw the influence of their large personalities into the appeal, and Mrs. L. P. Smith's intimate acquaintance with the deaconess work of the Wesleyan Church in England gave the Committee of the General Conference such detailed information that the memorial was granted. The development and conduct of the deaconess work was committed to the Woman's Board of Home Missions. The conservatives of the General Conference and Church at large were unfavorable to the movement, despite the fact that it was bringing back to the modern Church the authorized service of woman that obtained in apostolic times and in the early centuries of Christianity. Miss Bennett's address at the succeeding meeting of the Board, in 1903, reveals the magnitude of the task and the spirit of the women when they undertook it:

"The introduction of the great and, as we believe, vitalizing force of the deaconess in the Church, and the action of the General Conference committing the direction and superintendence of the same to this Board, entail a responsibility that should wring from every heart the prayer, 'Teach me thy way, O God, and lead me in a plain path,' for 'who is sufficient for these things?'

"A quorum of the Board in called meeting has already outlined a policy for this new element, but what was done at that meeting must be ratified at this; and if any changes are to be made, they must be made now. We are building for the future, and only that wisdom which cometh down from above can save us from mistakes in this important department. God grant that no personal prejudices, no importunate demands for help from pastors or congregations, and no fear of disaffection or antagonisms from any quarter may induce this Board to abate one jot or tittle of the two years' course of Bible study and systematic training authorized by the General Conference and prescribed by this body. To fail to maintain a high standard in one single instance, at this juncture, would be to establish a precedent that would inevitably bring discredit upon the deaconess and hinder, rather than help, the cause of Christ by cloaking pretentious ignorance in the garb of the Church. We need trained women, and need them badly. We need exceptionally fine women, as the specific calls from numerous pastors, congregations, and institutions clearly show. We could doubtless place a hundred such deaconesses in the next thirty days if we had them. But exceptional, well-trained women are not found or made in a day. Let the Church wait until they are found and prepared, and let this Board make it difficult for an unworthy applicant to become a deaconess, so difficult that even the most ardent advocates of the cause will understand that you do not intend to authorize the setting apart of any but the best. 'Quality, not quantity, is what we want.' We must have women filled with the Holy Ghost and with power—power to study and to think; power to wield the sword of the Spirit to the saving of life, as the skillful surgeon uses his knife; power to work under authority and to exercise authority, to project work and develop work. We must have women who have power with God and man; we need no

other kind. Too much time, thought, and prayer cannot be given to the launching of this new department."

The deaconesses developed under a missionary board very naturally felt the missionary appeal the greater call of the Church in the homeland and preferred appointments where human sympathy found largest play. But the larger field for her work is that of the Church deaconess. Miss Bennett's earnest desire for the larger development of this work is expressed in this paragraph of a letter to Deaconess Helen Gibson, December 31, 1921:

"We often let the idea dominate us that ignorant, illiterate, poor people need the glad tidings of great joy more than people in better circumstances. It isn't true, however, and I have really longed for some of our splendid deaconesses to be able to give life and time to the people who live in the homes of wealth and luxury. It is the living epistles known and read of all men that reach hearts that can be touched in no other way. Dr. James I. Vance has well said that our churches are filled with these, and to draw them into the way and will of God is as truly missionary work as working with the heathen in darkest Asia or Africa."

Miss Bennett was never happy over the method of financing the deaconess work, though the plans adopted were those followed by other denominations. She always felt the Church could never take the stand for higher living wage of the day laborer and other salaried peoples until she paid the preachers salaries that commanded their own self-respect. Concerning the change in the deaconess salaries she said in 1906: "A matter on which I sincerely hope this Board will take action is the stipend of the deaconess. Shall not the clauses limiting the financial allowance and promising life support after a certain term of service be stricken out of the statutes, and these self-sacrificing daughters of the Church be allowed to stand upon their

merits and work for the Church as do other missionaries, teachers, and preachers?"

Jealousy for her Lord's work made Miss Bennett solicitous that great care should be exercised in the selection and preparation of the women for home missions. This oft expressed desire was stated as follows in 1908:

"We need no surer evidence of the growth and advancement of an interest in home missions throughout the Church than a glance at the number of students that have entered the Training Schools this year. Twice, perhaps three times, as many young women will complete the required course next year as have been graduated from them before. Our prayers to the Lord of the harvest have been answered, our efforts have been crowned with success, and our hearts are full of thanksgiving as we see these young women surrendering their hearts to God and their lives to the work of the Church.

"We must not forget, however, that we need to be much in prayer for guidance in the selection of workers. A zeal for numbers unchecked will burden the Church with women for whom there will be no call and for whom the Board can find no special work. While every preacher in Methodism receives an appointment and the work to which he is appointed must accept him for at least one year, it is not so with the deaconess. She is called, and in the call a process of selection and elimination begins. Only the best are in demand. Women of broad education, of culture, refinement, and tact, all glorified by a spirit of self-abnegation, are sought by every agency desiring the work of a trained woman. Even such a one may sometimes fail, and in her failure close for years a door of opportunity and usefulness to some other woman. God has a work for every man and woman 'created in Christ Jesus'; but all women are not called to the office of deaconess, and this Board needs to see to it that only those who can fill that office shall be invested with its responsibility."

Miss Bennett's sense of responsibility for the intellectual development of these younger sisters in God's work, and her anxiety for their physical and spiritual life, seemed

natural to her great mother heart. "Take time to give God a chance" was her constant admonition. To these she said: "Oh! how we need the quiet times to let God speak to us, You, his leaders, need far more than any of those around you the quiet hour where God may speak with you. Each day is full for God's chosen ones, but prayer is the greatest part for each day's work. The day came when Moses, the great lawgiver, heard God say: 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.' "

It was the audacity of Miss Bennett's faith that opened the doors of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for woman's service among foreign-born people in the South. In 1893, when the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions held its annual meeting in the new Scarritt Bible and Training School, appeals were made for opening work among Cubans, who were moving in large numbers to Florida. Miss Bennett and Mrs. Scarritt sat at the large window in the hall that overlooked the chapel while the subject was discussed. When the measure was lost she turned to Mrs. Scarritt, saying, "This is home mission work"; and while there was no money in the treasury for other than parsonage work, she hastened to assure the framers of the appeal that the other woman's organization could take it up. A less daring faith would have hesitated to assume such unauthorized responsibility, but her winning power induced the Society to launch a work which flowered in three settlements and schools in Tampa and Key West, and hundreds of Cuban children and lonely women rose up and called them blessed.

When the twentieth century immigration brought increasing numbers of strangers of foreign tongue to the South, the women were ready to greet them as friends in Wesley Community Houses and in schools. The Panama Canal assured a shorter route to the West, and Miss Bennett's statesmanlike eye caught the vision of the rapid trend

of immigration to the Gulf Coast. The government was seeking to relieve congestion at Northern ports by routing certain immigrant boats to Galveston; already the oyster and shrimp canneries were bringing foreign seasonal laborers to Mississippi. Miss Bennett rallied the women to this field in 1908 as follows:

"As we look out on the field, asking guidance of our Great Leader for the next advance, 'the burden of the valley of vision' is on us. New Orleans and Galveston, the two great ports on our Southern coast toward which the immigrant tide is rapidly turning, appeal for help to this Board, and these appeals cannot be disregarded or even delayed. The old city of New Orleans, below Canal Street, with its one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants speaking a dozen different languages, its crowded tenements, its narrow streets, and generally congested and insanitary conditions, is a wide-open field that American Protestantism has scarcely touched. This section of the city, with that lying at the foot of the great levee that holds the waters of the encircling Mississippi in their channel, needs not one but a dozen Christian institutions of the best and most aggressive type to assist in evangelizing and Christianizing this conglomerate people.

"Local assistance for such a work can and must be obtained, and a small beginning—a Wesley House, with two or three workers—will not command the attention and respect of the Christian laymen to whom we must look for this financial help. A good hall, well located, as a central evangelistic mission, with an immigrant bureau and whatever other institutional features can be added, with an aggressive, forceful man in charge, assisted by a sufficient corps of workers, is imperative if we would begin a work that shall grow until it meets the demands of the situation. God grant that this Board at this meeting may authorize the establishment of an evangelistic mission and an immigrant work in the city of New Orleans!

"Galveston needs a work of a somewhat different character, but her need is not the less imperative. The Jewish people, with their usual wise foresight, have already intrenched themselves in splendid quarters at this

port and since last July have met, cared for, and carefully distributed two thousand Jewish immigrants. The same steamers that brought these two thousand Hebrew people to our shores landed on the same wharf five thousand immigrants who, save in exceptional cases, had no one to meet them or to hold out a helping hand as they entered this Christian country. Can this Board afford to delay the establishment of immigrant work in Galveston?"

St. Mark's Hall, on Rampart and Governor Nichols Streets, a splendid building, equipped for every phase of social and religious work, with a corps of consecrated, trained workers, tells the story of the accomplishment of her plan for New Orleans. She persuaded the General Board of Missions to workfellowship with the women in a great enterprise worthy this opportunity for service. Because of her insistence at Galveston an Immigrant Home, jointly supported and governed by the men and women of the Church, cared for incoming and outgoing strangers for several years until the government erected adequate buildings on Pelican Island. Schools, clinics, Wesley Houses, and other social centers grew up among Mexicans, Italians, French, Orientals, and the polyglot peoples in mines and packing houses, where deaconesses and missionaries wrought with the supreme sense of brotherhood. Churches stand among these peoples because these settlements furnished points of contact through the incarnation of the Christ spirit in the women who toiled for him there.

Miss Bennett earnestly labored that the spiritual life of the women of the Church would continuously grow, that they might be qualified for larger service as the years passed. Her satisfaction at the deepening of the inner life of the women is mentioned in her message to the Board in 1905:

"The greatest good accomplished by the Woman's Home Mission Society during the past year, or during all the years since it became a part of the autonomy of

the Church, is not recorded in the annual reports nor measured by suffering alleviated, the schools established, and the lives made better and more bearable by their work, but by the ever-growing goodness of the women who have lived and loved and wrought for them with God. The marked increase in the membership and collections of the Society since the Board met one year ago is the visible and natural result of lives that are taking on more of the learning of God through service to man and learning more of the mind of Christ in the struggle to apprehend the meaning of his words: 'Love one another as I have loved you.'

Again in 1908 she traces their power to certain characteristics of the Spirit-filled women:

"An experience of eighteen years among the so-called 'submerged classes' has compelled even the most sceptical to believe that 'God is no respecter of persons; that notwithstanding the accident of birth, and the blighting influences of the worst environment the gospel' is the power of God to every one that believeth, and that every soul born into the world has a right to the life more abundant which the gospel proclaims. The cumulative evidence of these years, seeing and knowing the results, has begotten in the hearts of some of our workers a very passion for humanity, and they count not their lives dear unto themselves if they can but testify to the gospel of the grace of God in the uplift and betterment of those less fortunate than themselves. A broader study of God's Word, a deeper cultivation of the prayer life, and an increasing spirit of liberality are manifest throughout the membership of the organization."

Miss Bennett's happy faculty of securing the coöperation of the women of the Church built about her a group of admiring friends whose devotion was a source of strength. But there are instances where the over expression of appreciation of some of them embarrassed her or precipitated humorous situations. No feminine expression of appreciation of her ability, however, quite equaled that of a very

urgent preacher who appeared before the Executive Committee of the Board on one occasion and pleaded with her to *make* the women grant his petition for help in building a parsonage. "Madam," he cried, "only the Czar of Russia holds more power in his hands than is in yours."

Miss Bennett's last eager call in 1921 to the women of the Church to press forward with this work makes clear the great motive which had actuated her leadership in the home field all these years:

"Our homeland, with a conglomerate population of more than one hundred and ten millions of people, representative of every race and nation on the globe, is unquestionably 'the greatest mission field in the world.' Sixty-five per cent of this population is non-Christian and wholly unreached by the Church. Christian civilization makes its impress upon it, but Jesus Christ as Saviour and Redeemer is unknown to this great mass of humanity.

"In 1919 there were 13,920,000 foreign-born people in our country, a large body of whom knew neither our language nor our customs. Many of these were idol worshipers from pagan lands, and all need the gospel and the fostering care of the Church. These are the people who could and should be made the great missionary force of the world.

"If the Church of God in this crucial hour of history would but tarry until the Holy Spirit came with Pentecostal power upon it, this land would become the missionary training school of the world. Multitudes would go back to all nations, speaking with tongues touched with a coal from off the altar, able to witness for Christ to their own kith and kin as no foreigner of another race and tongue could ever do.

"Hear the word of the Lord: 'Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' The heathen are at our doors and in our homes. Who bids them welcome with the words, 'You are my brother, and a loving God is our Father'? Our eyes look out through the daily newspapers on 'the uttermost parts of the earth,' and our hearts and voices answer: 'We do not want this inheritance for our possession.'

"We want their commerce and their trade, and we give them in return the debauching evils of our own land. Who compelled China to produce opium for the world and thereby corrupt her own people? Christian England! Who taught her the hideous vice of sexual prostitution? Christian America and other Western nations. Who to-day is ruining the health and morals of the young manhood of all those Oriental nations with the poisonous American cigarette? Christian America! The Church must get back to the apostolic source of power, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, if she would meet her responsibilities in giving the gospel to the people of her own land.

"The field is white unto the harvest. Lift up your eyes and look at the overripe bending grain all round about you. And hear the Master say again: 'The harvest is white, and the laborers are few.'

## CHAPTER VI

### A LOVER OF YOUTH

"It was remarkable that a woman of Miss Bennett's years and more than full life could have given three whole days to entertaining a young college girl as she did me the summer before I graduated at Vanderbilt," said a young woman when she read the message telling of her death.

"It is a strange providence that would remove one whose life was so full of good work for God and man," said another young person, whose mind utterly refused to grasp the fact when reminded that Miss Bennett had rounded the allotted span of life. "But she couldn't have done so; she was so youthful in spirit and vigorous in thought. No one could think of her as being old!" she contended. Statements like these, showing the generous gift of herself to the youth of the land and revealing youth's eager response, were made all over the South when she went away.

It was the fullness of her nature, the subtle relation and interaction of her splendid physique, intelligence, emotion and will, that charmed young people. Did Miss Bennett enter the room she soon filled it, but with such perfect unconsciousness of her charm that others forgot they were overlooked. If she spoke of her beloved work she generously drew some other quiet, less engaging fellow worker into the foreground that she might have part in the conversation. Was she your guest, she was honored by the courtesy no matter how humble the home, and if it chanced to be at the meeting of a Woman's Missionary Society her friends from a distance must meet her hostess. Were you shy, not sure of yourself, amongst strangers, her understanding heart laid barriers low and made you your best social self.

While Miss Bennett was an ever-surprising and fascinating personality to young people, it was their potential power which caused her to covet every young man and woman for her Lord. There are hundreds of people in many States who carry pictures grouped on memory's wall of Miss Bennett's good fellowship which won young people to her standard. One such picture she disclosed herself as she wrote in her journal of March 30, 1895, when she visited Dr. and Mrs. Poynter at Science Hill Academy, Shelbyville, Ky.: "Took the girls up town after dinner and treated them. They gave me a concert at night in Nan's room."

Was there a girl in that party who could fail to respond to her social graces as they grouped about her knee in "Nan's room," after the music? Was there one who was not fascinated as she told them of some of the interesting things God was letting her do for his kingdom?"

Mrs. C. Jackson, of Los Angeles, pictures another, older group won through her magnetic power:

"Years ago, when we lived in Independence, Mo., Miss Bennett visited us. I asked if I might invite the girls of my Bible class to see her, just a quiet home visit. Most graciously she consented. I arranged the chairs in a circle so each one could look into her face, as I wished them to have the close personal touch impossible at a public auditorium. The girls were thrilled. If ever the Holy Spirit used her as his messenger he surely did that night. So deep and true were her words, so inspiring! Resolutions to be, to do better and work more for the Master were made that night. Her words are still bearing fruit in the lives of a number she spoke to on that memorable occasion. What an inestimable blessing it was for this beloved woman to have so deeply inspired young life!"

Mrs. Janie McTyeire Baskervill reveals her power to captivate in this account of Miss Bennett's visit to Sullins College:

"One of the perils of maturity, and sometimes even of a life of devotion, is the danger of establishing a viewpoint which has a tendency to put us out of sympathy with the young life about us. Miss Bennett's religion enabled her rather to enter into the experiences of youth and thereby awaken their noblest instincts and inspirations.

"I shall never forget the impression she made on an audience of wide-awake schoolgirls some years ago. Rather reluctantly they filed into the auditorium to hear what they evidently thought would be a somewhat tiresome lecture. With her inimitable sense of humor and perfect understanding of the psychology of the situation, before appearing on the rostrum she insisted on removing her hat and at the same time laughingly observed that she had seen the attention of so many audiences diverted from the subject by the amusing tilt of a crooked hat and dared not risk such a predicament in the presence of young people. There never lived a girl who didn't want to be beautiful or one to whom a 'good looker' did not appeal as the real thing. Hardly had Miss Bennett stepped upon the platform when it was evident that her magnetic personality, the brightness of the smile that fairly radiated from her countenance, the earnestness of her message, and even the tastefulness of her dress had all combined to prepare the soil.

"As she proceeded without affectation, without mannerism to tell something of her early experiences in Homelands, the grand old ante-bellum mansion of her girlhood days all present felt the charm of her sympathetic nature.

"Surrounded by every luxury that wealth could supply, her home the center of princely hospitality, her friends predicted for her a brilliant social career. The prospect might have overwhelmed and dominated her had she not had the moral courage to lay down her life, if necessary, for her Church and the great world beyond because she saw an opportunity to perform a great service.

"The heroic never fails to attract young people. Here was a woman so sane, so human, and so uncompromising in her choice of the right that, with Paul, she too had said: 'The things that were dear to me I accounted as dross that I might know him and the power of his

resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.' The effect of this talk was instantaneous and lasting, and some of those girls date their spiritual awakening from that hour."

One of Miss Bennett's characteristics that endeared her to young people was her great sense of humor, which recognized and enjoyed a joke and passed it on to provoke fun and laughter. Sometimes, in her journeys where she touched all classes and conditions, she was the victim of ludicrous situations, which she treasured to tell to the young folk. In her youth she was a devoted reader of Bacon, and while not consciously moved by religious motive at that time she learned from him to believe in the "sacredness of secular pursuits, trade and commerce, as agencies for bringing in the kingdom of God." When she came into her heritage of faith this principle was applied to all honest toil and enabled her to relate religion to life, which gave her wide influence in molding the character of young people. It also balanced her individual missionary appeal. Her supreme desire was to enlist young people in missionary work, whether as volunteers or as fellow workers at the home base, not alone for the work's sake, but that they might have larger life. She spared no pains, counted no sacrifices too great, if thereby she might draw them into this workfellowship. Those who were guests with her in an Atlanta (Ga.) home when the Woman's Board of Home Missions met there in 1903, carry amusing memories of her efforts to win the daughters of their hostess. Four of the official members of the Board arrived before Miss Bennett did. When she entered the house and removed her hat Miss Mary Helm cried: "Why, Belle, what have you done to your head? What is the matter with your hair?"

"Nothing, Mary. Why do you ask?" she replied.

"Nothing? You know there is something the matter with it, Belle."

"Why, Miss Bennett, we loved the Psyche knot and fluffy curls about your face," said Mrs. MacDonell, almost in tears.

Mrs. J. D. Hammond entered the room later, and noting the changed coiffure said, "Why, Miss Bennett! Why, Miss Bennett, you've done your hair *à la pompadour!*" as though there might be some crime in that style of head-dress!

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. J. H. Yarbrough when she noted the change. "Look here, Miss Bennett, you are mighty mistaken if you think I'm going to sit facing you five days while you preside over this meeting with that stiff roll of hair about your head like a small halo!"

To this onslaught Miss Bennett replied: "There are two young girls in this home whom I want to win to the work of the Church. Most young girls think missionary women are old fogies and associate missions with tedious and uninteresting things. Now I am going to remove these objections from the minds of these girls in this home if good modern dress will help me. I don't wonder the young things think us out of date when we let ourselves so far forget our personal appearance as to be ten years behind the times in manner of dressing our hair."

This sympathy with youth gave Miss Bennett an understanding and appreciation which won hearts and confidences. She was impatient with condemnation of innocent amusement and natural joy of young people and protested against separation of normal life and religion. Her spirit of toleration, freedom from dogma, and fearless willingness to accept new methods of presenting unchanging truth, and her own deep personal experience gave her the message of authority for young people who were seeking a place for life investment. The report of her devotional service at the meeting of the Woman's Board of Home Mis-



BELLE H. BENNETT AT SIXTEEN



sions in 1907 is so nearly an epitome of her conversations with youthful inquirers it is appropriate to quote it here:

"Miss Bennett emphasized the constant and passionate prayer life of Jesus. She spoke of the call of the world and of the Church for leadership and the steps by which it is attained. He called the *twelve* to be with him that they might become *fitted* for *leadership*. The steps in leadership must be selection, preparation, appointment. A real leader, one with positive power, is one with the indewlling spirit of Christ. God's call to serve comes usually through some human agency, and entrance into service assures divine authority. Luke's account of the sending forth of the seventy, the laymen, into every city, and every place, gives also a note from the triumphant joy that came into the heart of our Lord as he caught a vision of a world redeemed through the testimony and service of his laborers."

In keeping with this faith she did not hesitate to become the human agency for calling missionaries, deaconesses, preachers, and lay workers to the "fields white unto the harvest." That she was mightily used of the Spirit for this high calling many laborers attest. Miss Mary Culler White, whose remarkable work in China is full proof of her divine call, tells how she was impressed when she first touched life with Miss Bennett:

"When I was a young teacher in Hawkinsville, Ga., the Woman's Missionary Conference of South Georgia held its annual meeting in Mulberry Street Church, Macon. At that time I was beginning to be interested in the work of the Sunday school and the Epworth League, but I cared nothing for the Missionary Society. My best friend, Mrs. Kate Watts, was elected a delegate from Hawkinsville to the annual meeting in Macon. I was much disappointed over this, for I had planned to take her with me on a visit to an old friend who lived not far from Macon. Poor Mrs. Watts! She was divided between a sense of duty as a delegate and a desire to go with me and make the visit. Finally,

I went with her to Macon at the time of the meeting; but I begged her all the time to cut the conference and go with me. While I was having this enforced stay in Macon, I was entertained in the home of my aunt, Mrs. J. B. Cobb, who was one of the conference officers. Miss Belle Bennett was also staying with Mrs. Cobb, and in this way I had my first contact with her. In spite of my begging, Mrs. Watts stayed at the meeting through Sunday, and, since I had to wait for her, I attended the conference too. I do not remember anything except the Sunday night consecration service. The leaders of the conference and many of the delegates had entered into a very deep experience through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At this service they arose and testified of what this experience meant in their lives. But all they said was so foreign to anything in my own life that I was much puzzled to know what they were talking about. I was seated about halfway back in the church; and quite accidentally, I suppose, Miss Bennett was sitting by my side. I remember that she made her own testimony, and then leaned toward me and touched my arm as if trying to encourage me to speak. I could not possibly have done so, for was I not at that very time trying to tear one of the delegates away and take her off on a pleasure trip? As a matter of fact, I succeeded in getting her away the very next day. But, even though it had no immediate effect, I could never forget that the gracious and beautiful Miss Bennett, the great missionary leader, had shown a personal interest in me and had believed that I could make a testimony. It was not many years before I learned what the women meant who spoke that night of the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and with that knowledge came the purpose to make the cause of missions the chief business of my life."

Let her own words explain why she held this burning zeal for enlistment of young people of the Church in this cause divine:

"We still have a great unoccupied field of women, girls, and young children who know but little of the awful need of the non-Christian world or the unreached millions in our own land. How can these, our very

own, know the joy and peace of fellowship with Christ unless their hearts and minds be opened to the privilege of helping him win the world?"

As a means of arresting the attention of students and opening their minds to this high privilege, Miss Bennett urged upon the Council the appointment of a college woman with spiritual graces, whose sole duty should be visiting students at colleges for the presentation of this ripe field for life investment. In 1912 she said:

"We are not securing the candidates for the work already assumed either in the home or foreign field. The Council needs a college woman of deep spiritual life, with special gifts and graces, who can give all her time to visiting the best schools in the South, high schools, normal schools, Church and State colleges, and in the large bodies of young women who attend these institutions search out the best and put into them hunger for souls that they may become fellow workers with God in bringing the world to Christ."

Miss Bennett hesitated not to call young matrons into the active work of the home base even though they were mothers and home makers. Above measure she honored the makers of Christian homes whose contribution to the world were their children reared in the "admonition and fear of the Lord." But she felt it due the children and the home that the larger vision of their world relationship should enrich their lives. A gracious young matron in Atlanta, whose gifts she coveted for world citizenship, is one of hundreds who tell of her appeal:

"I regret that I find none of Miss Bennett's letters among my treasures; I recall several parts of letters written to me at various times. One sentence particularly. She had written asking me to join her at a conference of social workers to be held in some Eastern city. Her influence had made the program makers assign me a place on the program. I found that I could not go and wrote her so. She answered in her own

sweet, gracious way, regretting that I could not be present and added: 'O, how I am longing for you in my Master's work!' It lingered for a long, long time and impressed me deeply."

The consecration of deaconesses and missionaries at the annual meetings of the Board and later the Woman's Missionary Council is always a very solemn and beautifully impressive service. Even a stony-hearted skeptic is moved by the high idealism shown by a group of young people turning from the ways of the world in a great adventure of divine love. As she presented the candidates to the Bishop for consecration, Miss Bennett's face was so radiant that those who witnessed saw

"The God within her light her face,  
And seem to lift her form and glow  
To azure orbits, heavenly wise."

These occasions frequently brought to her room at the hotel, or some quiet nook of the Church, young persons who had heard that night the voice of the Lord say, "Whom shall I send?" and were ready to say: "Here am I; send me." It was always granted unto her to flood the "inheritance of the light of Christ" into their waiting hearts. Her call to the women of the Church to pray the Lord to raise up missionaries and deaconesses for the work was iterated and reiterated until it echoed in 1918 in a call for a selective draft:

"With quickened faith and more insistent prayer we must cry to him who said: 'All authority hath been given me in heaven and on earth. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest.' It was he who by his own wondrous method of draft selected Paul and Deborah and many who gave their bodies to be burned. Is this Council not ready to form a Prayer League whose members in the night watches and in the early morning hours, and again in the evening when the sun goes down behind the horizon, will send up a

volume of united prayer to him to thrust forth the best and bravest into his white harvest fields?"

The secret of God's method in the selective draft, which alone insures victory, is given in an illuminating passage of her 1912 message to the Woman's Missionary Council:

"There can be no forward movement, no era of giving, no great offering of life except as these are attained through a deepening of the spiritual life of the leaders of the Church and a real spiritual revival among the members. New methods, attractive literature, cultivation and appeals for volunteers can accomplish nothing unless begun, continued, and completed in prayer and permeated from first to last with the Holy Spirit."

It must be understood that Miss Bennett did not question the power of the Holy Spirit to use any absolutely surrendered life, but she counted no life qualified for largest service which had not appropriated every available opportunity for preparation for that work. "Time spent in preparation is time spent in service" was one of her familiar expressions when urging volunteers to get ready for their tasks. She believed a chance at an education was the divine right of the child and that it was the duty of the Church and State to make this possible. She realized that economic power made it possible for State institutions to offer larger opportunity because of better equipment than the average Church school could afford. For that reason the State universities and colleges make larger appeal to young students who want the best and most modern preparation. She had largest sympathy with their view, but she believed such opportunity purchased at the cost of Christian educational influence detrimental to character. In keeping with her breadth of spirit she most heartily believed in coeducation. She could never see the value of breaking, for four years of higher intellectual pursuit, the natural relations begun in the home, continued in the ele-

mentary schools, to be renewed later in social life. The State universities, with their splendid equipment, in many places were admitting women on the same basis as men without making provision of dormitories for them. Religious instruction was prohibited in some of these schools; and while many noble men and women in the faculties unconsciously molded life by the power of Christian personality, there were others who wielded anti-Christian influence by the same power of personality. In some of the Southern States one-third of the student bodies in the State universities were Methodists or of Methodist families.

Miss Bennett was convinced that the greatest home mission work of the Church was the Christianizing and building up in Christ of the splendid student bodies of State educational institutions. She felt so keenly that the Church should take steps to meet this situation that she made it the leading passage of her message to the Woman's Board of Home Misisons in 1904:

"The Church may not expect in this generation to rank with the State in well-equipped industrial schools. Such institutions as most of our States are now establishing require a large appropriation for buildings and an annual grant for running expenses. Tuition is free to all who can attend them. Why should not the Church of God take advantage of these great opportunities? As a people we have so persistently declared the separation of Church and State a national necessity that as Christians we have, in a measure, overlooked the fact that Church and State must work together for the highest good of the nation.

"One of the greatest works of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions has been to erect and maintain Bible schools on the grounds of some of our State universities. Through these they have touched in the best way the lives of many of the strongest and ablest men and women of our country.

"If this Board will indorse the erection of a dormitory or coöperative boarding home on or near the grounds of our State industrial schools, putting these

buildings under deaconess supervision and management, making them practical Christian homes and training schools, we can, at a minimum expense, surround our young people with broader religious and educational opportunities. May we not, too, through the influence of such Christian homes leaven the student body of the State institutions? There are many men in Southern Methodism who, if they can be made to see that such a movement is worth while, will give the money to further it. One such building at Denton, Tex., Ruston, La., or Milledgeville, Ga., would be the planting of a seed corn that would eventually bring forth a bountiful harvest.

"I ask your thoughtful and prayerful study of this subject, and, if in the judgment of the Board it seems a practicable and possible movement, that during this session you formulate some plan for putting it before the Church and on the hearts and consciences of the women."

It was absolutely beyond the power of the Board to finance such institutions at that time. The total available collection that year was \$59,414.98, of which \$14,690 was appropriated by the law to parsonages. Experience had made caution in the suggestion of new enterprises a virtue, as the eagerness of many members of the society for something "new under the sun" could easily dissipate funds from work already dependent upon the Board for support. For this reason no action was taken upon this paragraph of her message by the Board in annual session. But that this suggestion was the outleading of the Spirit is made clear in the light of history. The North Texas Conference Woman's Home Mission Society took it up at its next annual meeting and launched the building of the first Methodist dormitory at the College of Industrial Arts, in Denton, Tex. Mrs. L. P. Smith, the instrument under God for working out Miss Bennett's vision, gives these connecting links between the message and its accomplishment:

"Miss Bennett talked with me of the way the Canadian Methodists had worked things out and then when

she put it in her message I saw how disappointed she was that nothing was done about it. I went home and wrote to the Secretary at Toronto and also to the North Forks (Dak.) University and secured a very fine magazine article. All I could get was favorable. Then Dr. Mouzon and Dr. Ward, later Bishops, were interviewed and promised help. I also talked to Dr. Boaz about the cost of dormitories. Miss Bennett lent her faith and encouragement. The next step was to present the matter to the North Texas Conference Society. God led all the way."

The character of this first Southern Methodist Church dormitory at a State school is noted in a letter to Miss Bennett's fast friend, Mrs. L. H. Glide, dated May 21, 1921:

"Did I write you after my visit to the College of Industrial Arts, in Denton, Tex., where we erected our first woman's dormitory, known as the Smith-Carroll Hall? That institution has in it a spiritual atmosphere that you probably will not find in any denominational school in all the country. I am sure that these dormitories, with the trained and spiritual-minded Bible teachers which we are putting into them are the open doors through which God is letting us find a way to the hearts and lives of the splendid young men and women who go to the State institutions."

This first venture of the Southern Methodist women, at Miss Bennett's call, into its work of conserving to the Church and nation its educated youth was followed by the Oklahoma Methodist women in their dormitory at the State University in Norman, Okla., by a second Texas Methodist dormitory at the State University in Austin, and by the Methodist women of Missouri at the State University in Columbia.

Her vision of possibilities of the Church's service enlarged as Miss Bennett led in this work among students. "If the Church is going to hold the strong, forceful young people who come up through her Sunday schools, Epworth

Leagues, and other organizations, she must keep in touch with them during their student life," was her repeated cry. She saw potential volunteers for definite Christian work among the earnest, purposeful men and women of the normal schools of the country. Accordingly she urged that deaconesses, especially adapted to work with students, be stationed in the Churches nearest such schools whenever their support could be secured.

This call for work among normal students explains the appointment of deaconesses to Richmond, Ky., nominally to aid Miss Bennett in her large correspondence. The fruitfulness of this endeavor is attested by many a teacher in the State whose social-religious vision and spiritual life were quickened by Sunday school and mission study classes with the deaconess. One of the teachers in Ginling College was won in this personal and spiritual way to serve in China.

In her last years Miss Bennett dreamed of great State educational federations in the South built up of denominational colleges around State universities. "By these federations," she wrote an intimate friend a few months before she went away, "the splendid men and women who attend State universities may have a religious atmosphere and influence round about them and the students of denominational institutions may have the benefit of great university curricula and special departments which State money furnishes." It remains for the American youth of the future, as he fixes his eyes upon the great horizon from which she caught the vision, to bring it to full fruition.

While Miss Bennett's search for men and women for the great mission fields of the world led her into fellowship and large sympathy with college groups, it did not narrow her friendships and appreciation of other young people whose lives were invested in other avenues of service. There are many men and women holding honorable positions in business and other enterprises who date their opportunities of

promotion to her kindly consideration and financial loans when they began their careers or needed the boosting of her sympathetic confidence. She had great pride in the success of young women in professional life and watched with eager interest the ventures of young girls in the business world.

Throughout her public career Belle Harris Bennett wrought longest and most fervently for the youth of the land. This woman, with a world mother heart, held out her hand to guide the boys and girls of this age into that high realm where obedience purchases fellowship with God, where prayer opens wide his treasure house of rich graces, and where "working together with him" wins world citizenship. This was the burden of her message which burned its way into the hearts of those who knew and loved her. To those who heard and to those who know her only through the deeds that she wrought, the spirit of the woman whose torch was "kindled at the altar builded in love's name" cries:

"To you, from failing hands, we throw the torch.  
Be yours to hold it high."

## CHAPTER VII

### WORK WITH NEGROES

THE first record of Miss Bennett's public service in behalf of the colored peoples of the South is found in her journal entry of October 18, 1891, when she had gone to Wilmington, N. C., to present the need of the missionary Training School at one of Mr. Sam Jones' meetings: "Mr. Jones had the announcement made that I would like to talk to the women Monday afternoon and to the Negroes at night. I was so cowardly about the latter."

With this beginning she went forward in her spirit of helpfulness as the way opened, speaking in Churches of colored people, to colored charity associations, teaching Bible classes, and befriending individual Negroes. The most vivid memory the women of the Board of Home Missions will ever carry of Miss Bennett was the Sabbath morning, May 5, 1901, at old St. John's Southern Methodist Church, St. Louis, when she presented the need of organized woman's work among Negro women and girls. Mrs. J. D. Hammond gives this beautiful story of the beginning of woman's organized work among colored people:

"Miss Bennett wanted to begin work at Paine years before it was done, but felt that the prejudice must die down somewhat before it was feasible. Finally, in answer to the argument that prejudice would die sooner if somebody fought it, she turned to God for guidance. There were three who prayed that afternoon in that upper room, and light was given. When the prayers were ended she rose from her knees and said, 'We will begin to-morrow morning.' And she did.

"That is my most vivid memory of her, as she stood in St. John's Church, St. Louis, that Sunday morning and spoke to that rich, fashionable congregation of these who are of the brotherhood. Despite her attractiveness

and her noble presence she was not a beautiful woman; but she was beautiful that day. Her face shone like an angel's. She spoke as simply and humbly as a child, but she moved the people like wheat in the wind. The thing she saw came clear to them—the oneness of the human race, of human need, of human obligation."

The minutes of that meeting, written by the Secretary, Mrs. Emily Allen Siler, gives this detailed account of that session:

"At the close of the morning sermon Miss Bennett made a brief, forceful talk upon the different fields of service entered by the Home Mission Society, and stated that it was the wish and intention of the Board to enter a new department of work which had long interested many of its members. Just as soon as \$5,000 could be secured, it was proposed to build a girls' hall at Paine College, Augusta, Ga., where Negro girls could be trained in industrial branches. She wished to give \$500 to that enterprise, half of that amount to be given in memory of her old nurse, 'Mammy Ritter.' Miss Helm gave \$100 in memory of her old nurse, 'Aunt Gillie,' and Dr. Palmore subscribed \$500 in memory of 'Aunt Phillis,' his nurse. Other gifts followed, amounting in all to about \$1,700 that day."

Miss Bennett's good statesmanship was shown in leading the women in coöperation with Paine College, the only institution of the Church for Negroes, instead of branching out into a new school. Dr. George Williams Walker, the polished, cultured scholar, divinely called to the Presidency of Paine College, had struggled from the beginning with insufficient money and a none too sympathetic Church back of him. He was greatly enheartened by this coöperation of the women and worked as a true yokefellow with them until his death, ten years later.

The reception given by the women of the Church for this new enterprise and the quality of Miss Bennett's gentle, persuasive leadership are recognized in this message to the Board at the succeeding session in 1902:

"When this Board held its meeting in St. Louis, one year ago, the establishment of an Industrial Annex for Colored girls at Paine Institute was left with the Executive Committee. Five thousand dollars as a voluntary offering was to be secured before the building at Paine should be erected; and although the Committee was assiduous in its effort to secure the amount, not until the very close of the fiscal year was the sum in hand sufficiently large to justify our belief that the house can be made ready for use for the opening of the fall session. While some of us could not see, in the beginning why He to whom the gold and silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills belong, withheld the immediate answer to our prayer for this sum of money, we can look back now and see how loving was the divine wisdom which ordered the delay, compelling us to lay this new and, as some felt, objectionable work upon the hearts and consciences of the entire Church. Blind eyes have been opened, deaf ears unstopped, and hearts once cold and indifferent have become warm and tender. All prejudice is not yet allayed, but many have said: 'Thank God for the opening of this door!' Truly, 'He maketh the crooked places straight and the dark places light.' The Board can now press forward with this department of work, knowing that the great body of the Church will commend and assist. But we earnestly entreat that every member of this Board shall do this work, remembering that race prejudice is to be overcome only by divine grace, and that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free: for ye all are one in Christ Jesus.' Be gentle, very gentle, in dealing with those who do not regard this work as we do ourselves."

Of course there was opposition to this work among Negroes; there had been opposition to every new enterprise of the Board, and it could not be expected that what seemed to some as radical an undertaking as this should pass without censure. Miss Bennett's forceful personality and determined steadfastness and the loyalty of her cohorts soon quieted open expression. In a characteristic letter to the General Secretary she gives one of the secrets of her avoidance of open difficulties:

"Just one more request, and I believe I will even say injunction. Don't let anybody disturb you on the matter of our work among God's poor, black-skinned children. May I suggest, out of my own experience, that you tell the deaconesses and other workers, as I shall most surely do from the platform at our next meeting (unless the Executive Committee prohibits), that when they receive letters or communications of an offensive nature about the Negro work, unless it is a public attack, never to allow anybody but the Secretary at Nashville or the President at Richmond to know that they have had such. Nothing so surely takes the wind out of sails like these as to absolutely ignore them. I used to get anonymous letters and various things of that kind concerning my work. After reading the letter, or generally just a bit of it, I would strike a match to it and promptly forget that I had ever received it. It helps the writer to believe that you never got it. To ignore a wrong is to pour ointment on a suppurating abscess."

This woman's work grew at Paine College until in 1913 a third building was added, a splendid brick dormitory, which, at the request of the students, was called "Bennett Hall" in honor of the beloved President of the Board. Miss Bennett's abiding faith in God's goodness and his ultimate purpose for the human race gave her great faith in the future of the Negro. She recognized his achievement of character and the individual accomplishment of many Negro leaders despite untoward handicaps. Progress was the law of life to her, and she believed in the progress of the whole Negro race. She could not feel that God's object was served nor that man's end of any race was

"Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,  
While only here and there a star dispels  
The darkness, here and there a towering mind  
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows."

The genius of her faith in the establishment of God's kingdom on earth made her work unceasingly, regardless of race inheritance to bring that day

"When all mankind is perfected,  
Equal in full bloom."

It was this conviction which made her declare that "obedience is the keynote of service and the cost of fellowship with God" when she talked with young people who had lives to invest. How often she asked: "Are you ready to go quickly to the more than fifty million unchurched, neglected, unsaved people of our land? Has the Holy Spirit taught you to look upon and love the dark-skinned people among whom you were born and reared as our brothers and sisters? The Master said: 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have loved one another.'"

On one such occasion at Vanderbilt University, a student sought an interview with her which developed in his request that she might talk with his mother, who was withholding consent for him to give his life to work among Negroes. The gifted, consecrated son had volunteered for this service while the mother, widow of a Methodist preacher, could not be willing for her son to be sacrificed upon the altar of work among colored folk. It is not strange that knowledge like this should send her to a Preachers' Institute in 1910 with the following address:

#### THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH TO THE NEGRO

"Something more than a year ago a Hindoo student matriculated in one of the large colleges of our Southern Middle West. Immediately it became necessary for the Y. M. C. A. Secretary to take a day off to find a boarding place for the young stranger. The Christian Woman's Board of Missions had established a dormitory on the grounds of this college, and, after some discussion on the part of the superintendent, board was secured at this place for the young Hindoo. The following day five young men indignantly left the House,

one of the five being a student volunteer for mission work in Africa. I relate this fact as an instance of the unreasoning race prejudice that still obtains in the Church of God.

"A Negro, of course, would not have been admitted to the college. If by any chance such a thing had occurred, the entire student body would have rebelled and the State legislature would have passed a bill by unanimous vote prohibiting interracial education. This young student volunteer had doubtless been born and reared in a Christian family, and his conception of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man had been given him in the Sunday school and the Church. He had gotten his ideal of a missionary career at some summer conference or some great Student Volunteer meeting, perhaps. He had an enthusiasm, possibly a great desire, to help his fellow men and to do the will of God, but you and I know how far wrong his conceptions were and how little he really knew of the mind of Jesus Christ.

"My special object in relating this incident of college life, however, is that we may see and realize that the mission of the Methodist Church to the Negro is three-fold. The program laid down in the first chapter of Acts is still the line of work to be pursued by the Church of God. Beginning first at Jerusalem, then in Judea, then in Samaria, then to the uttermost parts of the earth.

"Brethren, if the seven thousand itinerant preachers in Southern Methodism could be divested of their prejudice against the Negro and filled with the same courage that St. Paul had when he said to the Ephesian elders, 'I hold not my life of any account or dear unto myself,' etc., the Negro problem would soon be solved.

"There is not one of us here who does not know that the average Negro is discounted in every relation of life. The white man takes it for granted that he is a liar and a thief. All over the land there is a lack of confidence, spirit of impatience, and unkindly tolerance that can but degrade the Negro in his own eyes.

"If you men who stand in the pulpit could with honest and sincere hearts say to your congregations, 'These black-faced, ignorant, child peoples are my brothers and sisters, and I intend to treat them as such,' the Negro problem would soon be solved. You and I know that this

great so-called problem is not a race problem, neither is it a labor problem, though both of these enter into the great social or community question. It is an individual problem. All of us have in our minds some one or more Negro men or women for whom we have the greatest respect.

"We can no longer honestly and truthfully say the Negro is unworthy or incapable of improvement or of the best things that come to any citizen of this country. He has proved to the contrary. There is no good thing which any white man or woman in the land can claim, except some positions in the civil government of the country, that the Negro has not shown himself equal to.

"Neither is it a social question. None of us in the South need be afraid of that. We have but to look at the Jewish people in our midst, with their wealth, culture, and the splendid history behind them, and see how few inter-marriages are between this great people and the Christian people of this land, to assure ourselves of the fact that the social equality question has but a small part in the Negro problem.

"The mission of the Church to the Negro race must begin with the preacher in the pulpit. When the preachers of the Church are able to declare to their congregations that they intend to be neighbors in the truest sense of the word to the Negroes round about them and that the Word of God teaches that the Negro is as truly a child of God as the white man and can as surely be redeemed from sin as the white man, the mission of the Church will have assuredly been begun to the Negro. From whom does the Negro get his conception of God, of honesty, of virtue, of right living in any form, except from the white men and women round about him?

"I know that the intention of the framers of the program when they asked me to speak on the Mission of the Church to the Negro desired an expression of the belief of the womanhood of the Church as to our immediate duties to the Negro in some practical, concrete form. I would say, therefore, in the first place take an interest in the things that the Negroes are doing in your own community and let them know that you believe in their improbability and have confidence in their

ability and desire to become honest, upright, good citizens.

"At a great educational meeting of the Negroes in my own town, one to which I know a number of the prominent citizens had been especially invited, my pastor and I were the only white people present. Whatever is good for the betterment or the uplift of the white man, woman, or child is equally as good for the Negro. How is it that we have established no training school for Negro women or men when we see the great need for Bible teaching among them, for house-to-house visitation, for all the forms of Christian settlement work? How is it that we make no provision for trained nurses among them when we see the inroads that tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and all other diseases that humanity is heir to makes on them?

"Do they not need to have clean and sanitary homes? They do our laundry work, they nurse our children, they make our beds and cook our food, and their lives lie closer to ours than do the lives of our neighbors or kinsfolk. We are not separating ourselves from them; they are an intimate and vital part of our home life and will continue to be. If they suffer we too must suffer with them.

"What has our great Church done for them in an educational way in the half century since they were emancipated? We have had a part, just a part, in two schools for their higher Christian education. How meager and unworthy has been our work for them! The General Board of Education has brought this matter to the attention of the Church during the past four years, until a few of the people are beginning to see and to feel ashamed of their neglect and failure."

The confusion and immoral influence of the small cabin, overcrowded homes of the Negro slums that abound in every Southern town produce some of the acute problems of the colored people. Under the influence of Miss Bennett, Miss Estelle Haskin, when teacher of social activities at the Methodist Training School, led the students of the institution into various forms of service which tended to better some of these conditions in one of the Negro communities of Nashville, Tenn. These efforts resulted in the

establishment of Bethlehem Houses in Nashville, Tenn., and Augusta, Ga., by the Woman's Board of Home Missions. Children, young people, and overburdened women gather in these settlements for recreational, educational, and inspirational activities which are impossible in their homes. The Governing Boards of these institutions are composed of white and colored people whose common toil and responsibility for the uplift of the needy Negroes in congested black neighborhoods is breaking into the indifference and prejudice of both, and interprets the races to each other as no other organization has done. Miss Bennett followed the development of this work with keenest interest and frequently visited some class or club to inspire the children or old people by an address. Her courteous consideration of others and power of begetting love always won the hearts of these black folks. On one occasion she spoke to a Mothers' Club, and after she had finished an old Negro woman heaved a sigh and, turning to another, said in unctious voice: "Well, bress de Lawd, all the old-time white women ain't dead yet."

In nothing did Miss Bennett show her wise leadership more effectively than in her effort to safeguard the missionaries and deaconses appointed to Negro work from the danger of impatience and acrimony as they met opposition from white Church people to this work into which they were pouring their lives. When these tendencies were detected, she insisted upon restoration to normalcy by change of appointment, not alone for the spirit of the worker, but that friction between the races might not retard the movement.

With multiplied responsibilities weighing upon the administrative force of organized work, there is an ever-present temptation for one to lose herself in movements and thus fail in the joy of personal service. Miss Bennett was a remarkable exception to this rule; all through her

long public service there runs the golden thread of work with individuals—folks for whom Christ died. The great debt of the Christian to the brotherhood might be met by organizations, but for her there was always involved a personal equation which she could not pass to another. This spirit of personal service led her into activities for the help of Negroes in her own town. It was not as teacher she gave herself to them, but in the bonds of friendship she served largest and best. In sorrow and sickness and death they turned to her as to a gracious friend. This letter, dated July 4, 1919, to Josie Bates, her colored friend upon whose spiritual help she depended many long years, reveals how very human these relationships were:

*"My Dear Josie: Where are you, and why don't you come on down for your vacation? I have been expecting you ever since school closed, and still you are not here. Next week, Wednesday, I start for New York and on Saturday the 12th expect to sail for South America to be gone three or four months. We do not see each other often now; but with the great ocean and thousands of miles between us, I feel as if we might not be together again for a long time.*

*"I found the box of pretty violets you sent me in my mail when I came home. They were withered of course, but just as much appreciated, dear Josie, as if they had been perfectly fresh.*

*"Poor Mrs. Bettie Moberly, who has been living at the hotel since Mr. Moberly died, was stricken with apoplexy early this morning and has been dying all day. She is in the room just next mine, and I shall miss her very much. Miss Jennie Taylor came as soon as it was phoned her and has been sitting beside her bedside holding her hand. They have been lifelong friends. Well, if I don't see you before I go, think of me, and pray for me, as your affectionate friend always."*

A note on the back of this letter kindly loaned for "Miss Belle's biography" says: "When this letter came to me I left London on the first train and came home. I was with

Miss Belle all day before she went for this long journey. Day and night we (she and Stephen, her husband) prayed over her going and for the work."

Miss Bennett's distinct contribution to the Negroes of Richmond was a Bible study class into which she was thrust by the outleading of the Holy Spirit. For years she had been burdened because the Southern Methodist Church had not entered the door opened into Africa in the last decade of the nineteenth century at the time the Southern Presbyterian Church began work in the Belgian Congo. Money had not been available and the Church was thus delayed. One day as she agonized in prayer, asking God to open the way for the Church to enter this dark, needy land, he seemed to answer, saying: "Why not do something for Africa at home in the meantime?" So convinced was she that it was the voice of God that straightway she went to the telephone and called a Negro pastor whom she knew and asked if there was anything she could do for Negroes in Richmond. His feeling reply was: "O Miss Belle, my wife and I have been praying every day for nearly a year that you might spare some of your time for us, but you seemed so busy!" An interview with the pastor followed, which resulted in the organization of a Bible study class the next Sabbath, with all the Negro preachers in the town as her pupils. The superintendent of the Sunday school of the African Methodist Episcopal Church tells of the growth of this class and also of Miss Bennett's financial help to the Church:

"Miss Bennett taught a Bible study class at St. Paul A. M. E. Church from 1900 to 1904 every Sunday at three o'clock. It was well attended, ranging from 200 to 500 members. She would often speak to our Missionary Society and Allen Christian Endeavor League, and when she could get any prominent speakers of the white race she arranged for them to talk to us.

"In 1905, under the pastorate of Rev. J. W. Cald-

well, the church was about to be sold to pay off a mortgage; Miss Bennett loaned the Church the \$2,000 needed to save the Church. She was so liberal with the loan she did not set a time for the Church to return the money, but allowed the members to pay as they made it until it was all raised. Every time they paid \$100 she gave them \$10.

"Miss Belle was greatly beloved by the pastors and the members and little children. Whenever we were in need spiritually or financially she always came to our rescue. We looked upon her as our leader and as a mother because she took so much interest in us."

The pastor of the First Baptist Church at Richmond, Ky., Rev. J. W. Broaddus, also shows the influence of the Bible study class upon the community and her sympathetic response to their every need:

"The Bible study class conducted in one of our Churches was a source of great inspiration which made a definite contribution to the religious life of our community. Many of our leaders and Christian workers received their inspiration from this class.

"Miss Bennett was interested in every phase of our community life, whether economic, civic, or religious, and we were always sure of sympathetic consideration when we sought her advice or requested help. More than once she went to the rescue of struggling Churches, and in some instances her efforts alone saved the churches for the congregations. Truthfully it may be said: 'She went about doing good.' "

Miss Bennett claimed she could never have rendered this timely aid to their Churches had it not been for the friendly help of her brother, Mr. Waller Bennett, who stood by her in adjusting these loans. On one occasion they both went on the note when a church was mortgaged for \$4,000. The Negroes were fifteen years paying it off, bringing their moneys in small amounts tied up in handkerchiefs, in stockings, and other receptacles. There was a great celebration when the debt was paid; the released mortgage was laid on

a tin platter, a lighted match applied to it, and as the smoke ascended the Negroes gathered around and shouted their praise to the Lord that their Church was free of debt.

Those who know the Negroes of to-day are well aware of the fact that there are distinct classes among them, as there are among white people who have had different opportunity for cultural education. In some respects these differences are more accentuated and the classes and masses more separated among colored people than among the white. Bearing this fact in mind, it will be easily understood what this young Negro preacher in Richmond meant when he said:

"Miss Belle was a good Samaritan to the Negroes. There are two elements among my people, the highly spiritual and emotional and the cultured class. Miss Belle could reach both elements and say just the right word at the right time. Our community problems were brought to her to be settled; whenever we needed money, she loaned it to us and we were just as careful to pay it back with interest as if we had borrowed it from the bank; she was an intercessor between her people and mine and between the two factions of my own race. Our strongest prop has been taken from us."

It was not only in the Church relations Miss Bennett ministered to these dark people of her town, but, as this paragraph from Rev. J. W. Broaddus shows, she entered into their civic affairs and stood for justice and fairness before the whole community:

"Sometime ago the high school building for whites was destroyed by fire. A bond issue for raising money to erect a new building was submitted to all voters. Opposition to the measure was pronounced on all sides, and it soon became apparent that the Negro vote would be the decisive factor in the contest. After several mass meetings it was finally decided, upon the advice of Miss Bennett, that in the event the bonds carried certain improvements should be made at the colored high

school. The bond issue carried, and a magnificent high school building was erected for the whites. There was some delay in getting the work under way at the colored school, and in the meantime Miss Bennett 'fell asleep,' but she made provision in her last will and testament to take care of these improvements at the colored school in the event the school board failed to keep faith with our people. The school board did keep faith. This incident is referred to only to show her fine sense of fairness and justice.

"In her passing we have sustained an irreparable loss, for in her service to mankind she knew no race, nor color, nor sect. Her life was a beautiful demonstration of her faith in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

A notable work for Negroes into which Miss Bennett personally entered was the organization of the Madison County Colored Chautauqua, which came to splendid realization in May, 1915. Of this enterprise Rev. J. W. Broadus says:

"Miss Bennett was the moving spirit in the organization of the Madison County Colored Chautauqua, which, as an influence for good, has been felt throughout the South. The spirit of the movement is best expressed in the motto, 'Better homes, better schools, and better Churches.' Under the auspices of this movement some of the best men and women of both races have spoken to large and appreciative audiences of our people. It is generally accepted that no institution, aside from the Church, has made a larger or more beneficial contribution to my people. Miss Bennett for a number of years was our president and presided in our annual meetings."

Miss Bennett's account of this enterprise, before its opening, in a letter to Mrs. George Call, of Texas, gives an insight into the labor involved and something of her spirit:

"This week I am to have a great time with a Colored Chautauqua, here in my own town, which I have been

'promoting' for the past six weeks. The Lord has been good to me, for I had no idea into what deep water I was plunging when I promised the Negroes to help them with this enterprise. Two men of the county, however, Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Agricultural Agent, have thrown themselves into it and have made it possible when I could not have done it at all. When this is over, even though the weather may continue very hot, I mean to sit down, take a long breath, and give thanks to the 'Giver of every good and perfect gift.'

A letter to Miss Mabel Head, dated August 10, 1915, gives this graphic account:

"Our Colored Chautauqua was a big success! I came very near using the vulgarism 'howling success,' but when I remember the splendid, quiet, well-dressed audiences that sat day after day listening, with large hungry eyes to much that was not understandable to many of the people, I would not for a great deal apply such a term to them. I could but wish for you and Miss Haskin the night Dr. Dubois spoke. To an audience of quite fifteen hundred Negroes, with less than twenty-five white people in it, he gave the most brilliant and superbly delivered outline on the history of the Negro race. He seemed quite as familiar with French, and I should say possibly Arabic, as with the English. He gave us a few raps as Christians and white folks that were perhaps well deserved. He spoke of the Mohammedan invasion of Africa as an era unparalleled in the history of a race. Christianity with its slave trade was the next great era in that then largely unknown and unexplored country. The striking comment which followed was that the Mohammedan religion both preached and practiced the brotherhood of man; Christianity preached but failed to practice. Of course, his address was far above the comprehension of the average Negro, and I felt as Dr. and Mrs. Frost, of Berea, who were with me, expressed it, that we were losing a great opportunity. But it is not altogether lost, because these people saw, with admiring eyes, one of the great men of their race, and thy will not forget his striking personality and commanding appearance. We really had five days of exceptionally good things,

winding up with Shepherd on Sunday afternoon at our peace meeting and a splendid address on Good Citizenship from my pastor, Dr. Horton, at night. The election was just over, and he caught the Negroes completely with his references to vote buying, selling, etc.

"I went up last night to a final business meeting, determined to lay down my honors and retire permanently from Chautauqua administrations, but they were so grateful for what had come to them and so unwilling for me to leave them to stagger on as best they could, I didn't have the courage or gumption to just say: 'I can't and won't.' Of course they want one next year. All these people need is a leader in whom they have confidence. Before I close I will give myself the pleasure of informing you that many of my friends and neighbors, and a few kinsfolk, were so impressed with the success of the Chautauqua and the number of able speakers present that they have almost forgotten that they wholly disapproved of the enterprise. Josie and Stephen came down from London in time to render most efficient help. Tell Hackey that I have quoted her so frequently to a number of my fellow Chautauquans, she will find that she is pretty well known to some of them when she comes to Richmond again."

The following testimonial from Dr. Henry Allen Lane, the Madison County Agent of the Coöperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics of the State of Kentucky, brings to Miss Bennett's friends throughout the world this vivid picture of how she loved and served the Negro race in the community where she was best known:

"Colored people are by nature kind-hearted and appreciative, loyal and devoted, and, contrary to the general belief, they do not crave nor seek social equality and ultimate interracial amalgamation; they simply want social justice—their inalienable rights upheld and safeguarded. However, they believe that more social contact among the better classes of white and colored people would be helpful to all and strengthen the bonds of interracial friendship, promote mutual respect and understanding, and advance America's right to the moral leadership of the world.

"I became acquainted with Miss Belle H. Bennett about the year 1915 in a mass meeting called for the organization of the Madison County Colored Institute-Chautauqua. Miss Bennett had been requested by the promoters of this worthy organization to serve as its first president. She consented and served as president for a part of three years. Her administration was marked by unfailing interest, indefatigable industry, firmness, kindness, strict attention to details, and contagious enthusiasm. She brought together the different religious groups of Richmond and Madison County, torn asunder by denominational strife—Methodists, Baptists, Calvinists—and united them into an effective force for the uplift and enlightenment of the colored people of Madison County. Through her committees she brought to Richmond a brilliant array of Negro talent from all parts of the country—Carver, Dubois, Proctor, Simmons—whose lectures, addresses, sermons electrified, uplifted, and enlightened the colored people of Madison County as well as people from adjoining counties. She was democratic in her dealings with colored people, as the following incident will show: I think it was one Friday evening in August, 1916, during the Institute-Chautauqua, that Dr. W. E. B. Dubois, famous scholar, orator, and sociologist, was to speak; 1,500 people, white and colored, crowded into the ball park to hear the address. Some one decided to rope off a space for the exclusive use of white people. Miss Belle, noticing the roped space, inquired what it meant and when told its purpose she at once ordered it removed and gave orders for the space to be filled up by whosoever desired a seat, and so far as I know no white person was in the least offended. The love and respect of the colored people followed her across the sea, when she visited China in 1916 as I remember. During the Chautauqua of that year a sort of informal farewell reception was given her at the ball park, which was closed by Dr. H. H. Proctor's prayer for her safe voyage and return. One sentence in that prayer lingers in my memory. Miss Belle, dressed in spotless white, stood, with bowed head surrounded by colored friends, while Dr. Proctor, famous colored Congregational minister from Atlanta, Ga., stood by her side with his hand lifted above her head prayed God to 'allow no deadly submarine to

come near her bark.' Fervent amens were heard on every side. She made her voyage and safe return.

"One more incident will show her deep interest in the colored people. One fine evening, in the fall of 1920, accompanied by her secretary, Deaconess Olmstead, Mr. Neal Bennett, and Dr. Telford, she motored down to my place on the Irvine Road, and requested me to go with them to visit some colored schools. She seemed greatly to enjoy the calls; and as the pupils listened with smiles on their dark faces as she talked to them, I thought of Florence Nightingale visiting the Turkish hospitals at Scutari. By her death the colored people lost a true friend, whose place in their hearts can never be filled."

After the great World War, when the true spirit of patriotism was appealing to the citizenship of the United States, the Commission on Interracial Coöperation came into being. When the leaders of the movement sought to enlist the womanhood of the nation in this effort for interracial good will, they turned to Miss Bennett for coöperation and leadership. Dr. W. W. Alexander, Director of the Commission, thus reveals how Miss Bennett's influence had been working as leaven through the years to make ready a people to help create the Woman's Work of this Commission on Interracial Coöperation:

"Through my contact with the Bethlehem House in Nashville, I became aware of the progressive attitude which the leaders of the Woman's Missionary Council were taking regarding Negroes. I kept in close touch with this through the years and knew of the growing interest which Miss Bennett and others had. On this, I based my faith that Southern women could be made to take a larger interest, and I requested my Commission to grant me the privilege of taking the matter up, as a first step, with the women of the Council. This led to correspondence with Miss Bennett and, at her invitation, a visit by me to the Council at its Kansas City meeting. I made an address, suggesting that the Council appoint a committee to restudy their relation to the whole situation in view of the new conditions.

This was met with immediate response and support from Miss Bennett, and a committee was appointed.

"With this nucleus I went forward, calling a meeting at Memphis of women representing many Southern organizations of women. In the development of this meeting I had Miss Bennett's full support. She was present and helped to guide it with her masterly hand. I have a feeling that Miss Bennett, more than anybody else, had through the years laid the foundation for the new attitude which Southern women are taking, and I do know that she, more than anybody else, put into my head the calling of this Memphis meeting and the attempt to reach our Southern women. I cannot state this too strongly."

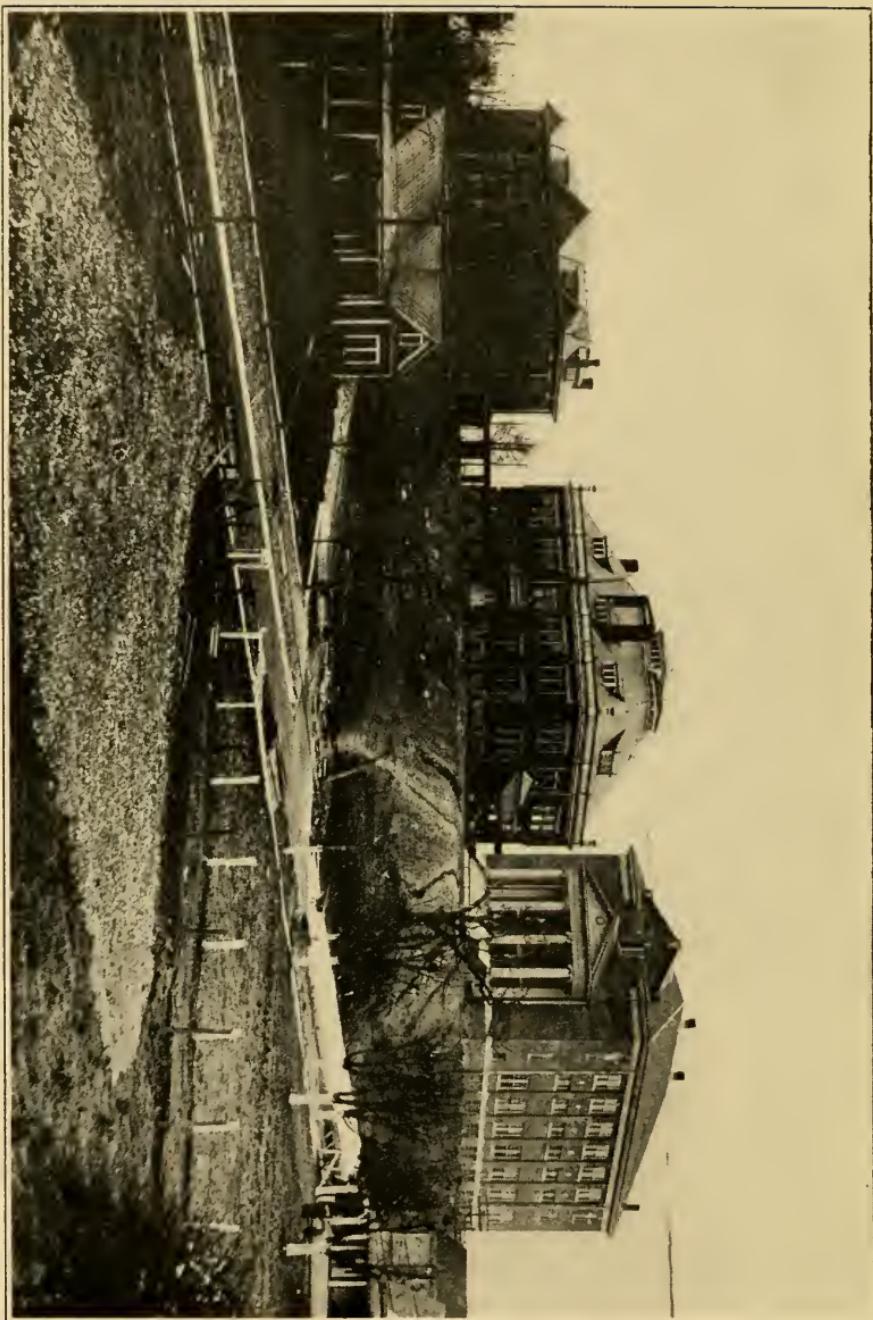
No mention can be made of Miss Bennett's work among Negroes without reference to her distress over the deplorable conditions of the little black children of the streets for whom neither parents nor society seemed concerned. She felt that society and the Church countenanced the increase of Negro criminals as the children of tender age passed through the Juvenile Courts, to return again and again until they ultimately found their way to the chain gang because of neglect. For ten years before her death she called attention on many platforms from which she spoke to this social crime. She pleaded for farm schools to which this neglected child life might be removed, and three times land was offered and moneys were given her for the establishment of such an institution. Once she felt the answer to her prayer for a Farm School for Negro Boys was so far assured that a man trained in manual arts was engaged as principal for the school. But the World War intervened, and the cost of maintaining such an institution on a worth-while basis seemed beyond the power of the Woman's Missionary Council, and it was never established. This Farm School for Negro Boys was her one outstanding unrealized vision.

Thus Belle Harris Bennett was spent in lavish manner

for God's dark-skinned children in her own country because of her great human sympathy, offspring of love, that divine quality of her soul. It drove her into the homes of want and squalor of the masses of these people to help the women and little children. Again, her faith in the progress and ultimate high achievement of the race forced her to toil that the foundation might be built upon the ethics of Jesus Christ, whose love brought full redemption for all the races of the earth. And yet again, her belief that God chose her to help was so implicit she could not resist the urge to workfellowship with him in bringing the kingdom for these people next her own door. Like Stradivarius of old she could cry:

“My work is mine,  
And, heresy or not, if my hand slacked  
I should rob God—since he is fullest good—  
I say, not God himself can make man’s best  
Without best men to help.”





SUE BENNETT MEMORIAL SCHOOL, LONDON, KY.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PRESIDENT OF THE WOMAN'S MISSIONARY COUNCIL

WHEN Miss Bennett had been President of the Woman's Board of Home Missions ten years she had reached the apex of popularity. She had traveled throughout the Church, and by her persuasive presentations of reasons for organized home missions and the compelling power of her personality she had won many friends for the cause. The institutions established under her administration had proved her to be a leader of vision, and men and women were ready to accept her leadership. The progress of the work was so marked that, in her own words, she had "seen the Home Mission Society grow from a poor little despised foundling to a strong agency for betterment of humanity but not yet a loved work of the Church."

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, twelve years older than the Woman's Home Mission Society, was also a flourishing organization, carrying light, truth, and love to the territories allotted to the Southern Methodist Church in China, Korea, Brazil, Mexico, and Cuba. Miss Bennett's "wholeness of interest in the human race" made her throw herself through the years into this foreign work as she had done in the home field. As one of the three managers of the Board she was a dominant factor in stimulating daring activity.

Both of these woman's organizations had done a great work and had been signally blessed of God in doing it. In 1906 the combined constituency was something more than one hundred thousand members, for at least two-thirds of the membership of each organization were members of

both. They were collecting by voluntary gifts nearly \$250,000, while the General Board of Missions, with 1,600,000 Church members to draw from, a fixed assessment on each pastoral charge, and 6,835 itinerant preachers as collectors, received and expended \$587,761.70 in 1906. Most of the members of the Woman's Misisonary Societies contributed also to these general collections.

Notwithstanding this fine record of the women, the College of Bishops and General Board of Missions, without submitting the question of union to the women themselves, recommended to the General Conference of 1906 that the two woman's organizations should be consolidated. It was claimed that the preachers found the support of the two organizations in the local Church difficult and that there was friction between them. Others claimed the aggressive measures of the Woman's Home Mission Society were destined to interfere with the larger growth of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, and *vice versa*, that there would never be a chance for the home field when the Church was pro-foreign in its interests. The measure of forcing a union without giving the women an opportunity of expressing themselves seemed high-handed to the General Conference. It resulted in the appointment of a committee to develop plans for unifying all the missionary activities of the Church, to be presented to the General Conference in 1910. This committee was composed of two bishops, five preachers, two laymen, and four women; the women being the President and General Secretary, respectively, of the two woman's boards.

The plan finally accepted by the General Conference in 1910 merged the three mission boards into the Board of Missions, constituted of one-third preachers, one-third laymen and one-third women, with ex-officio membership of all the bishops of the Church and all the officers, men and women. A woman's organization known as the Woman's

Missionary Council, with home and foreign departments, was created to direct the women's activities. This plan did not force the auxiliaries of the local Churches or of the Conference societies to unite. It was really a federation of Home and Foreign Societies that functioned under this new body—union was left optional with the Conference societies. In the light of subsequent development this organization without mandatory power concerning union was indefinite and to some inadequate. Miss Bennett's spirit of democracy would accept no terms that forced the women to any measures without the full consent of the majority, and by such a federation the final action rested with the rank and file. She, with the other women members of the committee, sought to safeguard the autonomy of the woman's work, for in this power of self-propagation, self-support and self-government lay the secret of success of the woman's movements of the Church. Miss Bennett constantly insisted that the women must have some direction of their own work and never become mere collectors of moneys for missions. Of the plan itself Miss Bennett wrote Mrs. F. F. Stephens, of Columbia, Mo. as follows:

"I am a unionist, but I did not believe in the union of the Woman's Board with the General Board on the basis which we were compelled to accept. I accepted what they gave us, fearing something worse—complete subordination. The constitution under which we work was written by the brethren; and while we were given an opportunity to consider and suggest changes, it was not until after we reached the General Conference. Even then a number of suggestions were met with the statement: 'Bishop — won't stand that.' Fifteen women to forty-five men haven't much showing; added to this the power of the Board is really centralized in the hands of the Secretaries in the Publishing House."

The Executive Committees of both the woman's boards convened at the seat of the General Conference immediately

after the passage of the measure to organize the new Woman's Missionary Council. Miss Bennett was unanimously chosen president. With her accustomed loyalty to the Church she subordinated her personal feelings and sought to rally the women of the Church to the changed organization. She sent this message to the women throughout the connection after this meeting adjourned:

"As women of God, called and empowered to act on the General Conference Committee, none were unmindful of the difficulties the changes involved. No thinking woman hugged to herself the delusion that the re-adjustment and consolidation could be made without sacrifice and pain to every member to whom the old way had made service a joyous blessing.

"But the fullness of time for an advance movement had come, and devout, godly men and women, striving to know and do the will of the Father, could but read the signs of the times and go forward. To such 'the kingdom of God and his righteousness' must always be the goal of duty. And to such the guidance of the Holy Spirit is always unfailing.

"Once again the great Head of the Church illuminated and made plain the old paths, wherein man and woman were set to walk and work together, if they would do his perfect will, and fifteen members of the General Board of Missions were women—ten elected by the General Conference and five by virtue of the offices they fill.

"Organic union of the woman's boards was not forced, but a loose consolidation of the two, forming a Missionary Council, with power to appropriate the money raised by the women and to develop missionary work among the women and children, in accordance with the policy of the Board, was a part of the plan. To have denied the Council these privileges and activities would have meant the ultimate dissolution of the woman's Church-wide organization."

Of course there were difficulties in effecting changes in these time-honored institutions and confusion in furnishing regulations for the Council and for the other two socie-

ties in the event the Conference did not ratify the union. There were some who would have preferred a mandatory ruling concerning union; there were some who feared the prestige of one or the other organization would be sacrificed and were not timid in prognostication, which of course affected the morale so far as their influence went. Both societies feared loss of interest by reason of the inevitably shortened program of education in so large a body. Small debts in both departments stood as hindering blocks to others, while there were some who saw in this forward movement Miss Bennett's personal ambition to be president of all the woman's work of the Church.

There was also genuine heartache among some who were so wedded to the glories of the past that the future, under this new program, held not a single ray of hope. Among these was Miss Mary Helm, Miss Bennett's "strong tower" of pioneer days. She foresaw the property of both the Woman's Boards passing into the hands of this new Board of Missions to be sold or disposed of at the will of the majority, and she could not forget there were three times as many men as women on the Board. She could only see the future loss of the woman's independence in this liaison with the general missionary work of the Church; she could not be comforted and continuously mourned: "Belle has sold her birthright." Miss Helm was not at the General Conference, and she gave a literal interpretation to the papers adopted by that body by which she saw *Our Homes*, the organ of the Woman's Board of Home Missions, abolished. Before the Executive Committees of the Woman's Board met she tendered her resignation and could not be induced to wait for the action of the women of the Church upon the whole matter. It would be impossible to magnify Miss Bennett's suffering over this unhappiness of so many who had built up this magnificent work. But

she was so perfectly assured the movement was right that she never wavered, and endured

"Each rebuff  
That turned earth's smoothness rough—  
Each sting that bid nor sit, nor stand, but go!"

On April 20, 1911, at St. John's Church, St. Louis, Mo., the Woman's Missionary Council convened in its first annual meeting. Nearly a hundred members responded to roll call, and it was a season of tense nervous excitement. At no time in her full, eventful life was Miss Bennett a more perfect exponent of the promise, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength," than she was as she rose in her gracious dignity to deliver this, her first message:

"Gathered here to-day under a new name, as representatives of two organizations dear to the heart of every woman before me—organizations through which thousands of other women have labored with us for the uplift and Christianization of this land and those larger non-Christian lands where gross darkness covers the people—the shadow of a lingering sorrow falls on us.

"Great and radical changes always manifest themselves in something of a revolutionary form. Some things that seemed vital are torn away, leaving wounds and scars behind. Some things hard and unlovely thrust themselves in, unwelcome reminders of the tender grace of a day that is dead.

"In the unexpected dissolution of our Woman's Boards and the readjustment of all of the missionary forces of the Church there could be no exception to this rule of change. The action was radical and far-reaching, and we naturally face the future with mingled feelings of hope and fear.

"In the joy of fellowship and service with our Lord a larger life has come to each of us. We have had a world-wide vision of homes and lands where woman, created in the image of Almighty God and born to hopeless superstition, accepts with blind fear a 'sphere' that narrows and degrades her life and that in more than half the world puts her on a level with the brute creation. We have seen the manhood and childhood

of these homes and these lands held in a relentless bondage by a dwarfed and weakened motherhood, and our own responsibility for the undoing of these wrongs burns like a fire in the bones.

"Startled into a new conception of what the debasement of God's image in the womanhood of nations means, we have raised for ourselves a higher standard of justice, judgment, and righteousness, and to be made channels through which all for whom Christ died may know him and the power of his resurrection has become the desire and prayer of our lives.

"And now we are here to counsel together for the first time concerning the work at home and abroad and to enter upon its administration under a new constitution.

"The law enacted by the last General Conference and given verbal expression in that constitution unites the three great Mission Boards and gives woman a rightful place in this most important council of the Church.

"To this body, henceforth to be known as the Woman's Missionary Council, is accorded the right to nominate four Secretaries and an Assistant Treasurer, to be elected quadrennially by this unified Board, these Secretaries to be coördinate in official action with the four men elected as Secretaries of the Board at the same time and place.

"The Woman's Council is also empowered to present the names of ten additional women to be elected by the General Conference as managers of the unified board, thus giving the woman's societies a representation of fifteen in a body composed of thirty-nine elective and seventeen ex-officio members.

"The property of the unified Boards, heretofore held in the name of the respective organizations financing and controlling it, is now to be held in the name of the Church to which we all belong and through which we all work. To safeguard the institutions established and maintained by the women in the past and to emphasize the fact that the missionary organizations through which they have leavened the whole Church are today as necessary to its best and broadest life as they have ever been, the money raised by these societies must continue to be appropriated to the work heretofore established by them and hereafter inaugurated under the provisions of the union.

"I need not rehearse further the details of the terms of the union. You have them before you in the printed reports. They are not all we could have desired, but how could that be expected? Never before in the history of th Church have women been admitted to membership in any of its administrative or legislative councils. Now, by a unanimous vote of its highest law-making body, they have been called upon to assume the responsibility of active participation in its most important and sacred trust. Has any other Church in our land honored and dignified womanhood by a similar charge or one for which it has been more manifestly chosen and appointed of God?

"The General Board of Missions needed the women. The women needed the larger outlook and the greater responsibility which a united Board alone could give, and the world needs a Christianity, a Church animated, cemented, and propelled by a membership united in council, united in purpose, and constrained by the great Spirit which filled the Son of God when he became flesh and dwelt among us."

Mrs. W. J. Piggot, of Kentucky, draws this picture of the impression Miss Bennett created at this Council meeting:

"For nearly two weeks she occupied the chair, presiding over the large assembly with an infinite tact, a calm judgment, and a spirit of fairness which commended itself alike to those who made history and to those who watched history being made.

"Her constraining love, her unwavering faith, and her compelling personality were powerful factors in producing that blend of purposeful women in the Church who from that time laid aside personal heartburnings and entered with loyal enthusiasm into a union of forces for the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth.

"Her powers of physical and mental endurance during the strain of continuous sessions were a source of wonder to her coworkers who knew her painstaking care for the detail of the work entrusted to her, and who saw her broad mental grasp of every situation. Great leader that she was—and she ranks with the greatest women leaders of the nation—she had a most

profound and tender regard for every individual member of the organization over which she presided. However untried or inexperienced the member might be, her clear, penetrating eye saw the possibilities in the woman and she did her best to develop her powers.

"She loved frankness and 'covenants openly arrived at' so much that she readily detected shams and veiled double purposes. These she rebuked and set aside in straightforward fashion as unworthy and out of season. She so presided that parliamentary law was made a medium for getting things done. The law, not the individual, was made the servant."

The greatest difficulty that Miss Bennett encountered in building up the woman's relation to the general work of the Board of Missions came through her jealousy for the autonomy of the woman's work. The general mission work of the Church had always been delegated by law to the official members of the Board, whereas much of the woman's work had been more democratically managed by including active standing committees to coöperate in government with the women officers. The new laws of the Board of Missions made no provision for this outside relation, and when the meaning of the constitution was submitted to unbiased judgment, it made the women secretaries and treasurer amenable to the Board and not the Council. The conflict of official relations with this dual interpretation of law was most painful and often embarrassing. As the chosen leader of the women, Miss Bennett unyieldingly held to a liberal interpretation favoring the women whose work and diligence secured the moneys that made possible the enterprises of the Woman's Missionary Council. By every token her understanding of democratic government and loyalty to the principles involved and her regard for the rank and file of the women demanded this course.

Misunderstandings also led to the discontinuance of the two woman's missionary papers before the women were consulted, and a joint paper for all the missionary forces

of the Church was established. These papers were not only self-sustaining, but they were sources of revenue to the work of the women. There was distress also because some of the promoters of the united Board had expected there should be one treasury and that all properties should be transferred to the Board of Missions. But a wise adjustment of the management of its funds tided the new organization with separate money accounts until the next General Conference, when these difficulties were relieved. It was inevitable that those difficulties and the friction of readjustment would bear heavily upon Miss Bennett. Her sympathy with the disaffected women, her keen sense of responsibility for the ongoing of the King's business, and her loyalty to the woman's cause in the Board, with her ceaseless toil, made such inroads into her health that she was forced to seek rest and a change of climate for months. She was ever courageous and so keyed to full faith in the final triumph of the larger life of the Church that the world did not realize how she suffered. A paragraph from a letter she wrote when she was ill to the Secretary of the Woman's Home Department confides something of this agony. The letter is dated June 26, 1912:

"I know there are some women and many men who would gladly see me retired, but I have not thought they were those who love the home mission cause or the woman's cause. I have not felt I have suffered for the right, even in a small measure as He suffered and that too from his own kindred and own people, but I have suffered more than I have been willing to tell even you, to which my broken health testifies. But, dear friend, God has surely been with us while the cloud was above as when the pillar of fire led. I know he will save the world, even if we fall out of the ranks of his army, but I can never forget Paul's great statement: 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good work, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.' "

By the sheer power of her own faith Miss Bennett encouraged the women of the Church to faith in this union of missionary forces, despite the confusion of adjustments and readjustments. This inspiration was wrought, as Mrs. W. J. Piggott describes, through the power of her magnetic personality:

"She asked and expected much of her coworkers, sometimes making demands which they, conscious of limitations of time and ability, felt to be far beyond their power to deliver. While she paid the tribute to her followers of asking hard things, she encouraged so steadily and inspired so truly that she developed fine abilities in women by the sheer measure of her faith in them, and by her own gracious bearing she gave every task she laid upon her people the imprint of a signal honor and a high privilege. By her faith she stimulated in the individual the 'power to conquer cruel doubts and fears,' thus multiplying herself through newly developed leadership many times throughout the Church."

Because of the wisdom of her leadership the women of auxiliaries and Conference societies were ready for organic union, with a prorated division of moneys to the home and foreign work, before the end of the quadrennium. The General Conference of 1914 granted the petition of the Woman's Missionary Council to safeguard the property rights of the women, and the concurrence in the continuance of a distinct woman's treasury helped relieve burdens incidental to the beginning of unification.

To Miss Bennett the great business of evangelizing the world demanded the greatest skill and largest support the Church could secure. She deplored the fact that many, even Church people, saw this world-wide enterprise as a small, secondary affair. With her heart set on making the King's business the greatest business of the world, she sought to enlarge the working force of the Council and bring it to such efficiency that large results were inevitable. This state-

ment was her oft-repeated challenge when she pleaded for a larger home base:

"I used to hear Dr. Lambuth say so often when he was in the office as General Secretary and had no assistant at all except young Mr. Cain, that he could see only too well how the children of this world are wiser in their day and generation than are the children of light, when he looked at a great business house dealing with the Orient and saw how it employed twenty-five, fifty, or even a hundred men to keep up with and extend its work while we, a Church then of two million members, employed only two or three men and women!"

At her insistence the secretarial force of the Council was increased and a splendid quality of missionary literature created. In the nearly twelve years in which Miss Bennett was president of the Woman's Missionary Council she saw the membership more than triple and the annual collections approach the million-dollar mark. The work in every field was strengthened and enlarged. New work was inaugurated in Africa, while the kindergarten and Bible woman's work in Japan, conducted in years past by the General Board, was taken over and greatly enlarged by the Council, thus making seven foreign mission fields served by the woman's organization. In the home field, Wesley Houses and Bethlehem Houses increased in number and usefulness, and plans for greatly enlarged city mission programs were developed. New work in rural districts was begun, and the home work, already highly socialized, found larger fields of service through multiplied social-service programs.

This account of the growth of the woman's work of the Church would be unfair and incomplete if it were assumed that the policies and their development were altogether Miss Bennett's work, regardless of the wise and loyal co-operation of the women who toiled tirelessly by her side. It was her unusual valuation of human personality and power of creating faith in these world ventures which en-

abled her to secure this loyalty and coöperation. By this adventurous faith in human values she brought into active work a host who otherwise might never have discovered themselves or risen to God-given tasks. Of course there are instances of mistaken judgment, but in her disappointments the axiom, "The mean man doubts, the great-hearted is deceived," holds true.

The formation of the Woman's Missionary Council forced much more secretarial duty upon the president than is usual in most women's organizations. Because of this there were some who said she was autocratic. It is true that "it takes something of the autocrat to make an effective leader of the sort that seek accomplishment through group action," and she did speak with authority concerning the great business of the Church, for her conviction of the function of the Church was very clear. But she was taxed with leadership of many who were slow of heart and barren of vision, and there could be little wonder if, like Moses, on occasions she was tempted to "pound the rock." Her loyalty to movements and enterprises, carried sometimes by the majority over her desire, showed her broad willingness to coöperate where principle was not involved. As contrary to the spirit of the autocrat, those who were closest knew her to discount her own ability in recognition of others whom she considered better qualified for the work. She was dependent upon friends whose words oftentimes gave encouragement that sent her forward when distrust of her own powers made her falter. She was not self-seeking, but diligently followed her only quest, that of "seeking to know God's will and to do it."

It was a recognized policy with Miss Bennett that group leadership was democratic and the women who worked with and through the Conferences should share responsibility of administration of the work. She gives expression to this conviction in a letter, January 12, 1921, to Mrs. B. F.

Lewis, Jackson, Miss., when she urges the repeal of a Mississippi Conference Society by-law which necessitated frequent changes of Conference officers:

"I know that the education of our women on the great subject of missions is of prime importance and the attendance of missionary meetings, institutes, and conferences is one of the chief methods in which they receive instruction about our work; but the Council is a law-making body, a body in which hundreds of thousands of dollars are appropriated every year and the future of numbers of lives mapped out for them by a careful appointment to the great mission fields of the world. For these purposes we need women of ability, women of experience, women with deep prayer life, and women who are willing to sacrifice the things of the world and say, as the great apostle did: 'This thing I do.'

"By constant changes in the membership of the Council, we inevitably concentrate the work of the Council in the hands of a small group of people, for the most part salaried people, and thereby break down the great power of the democratization of the womanhood of the Church, which is one of the great elemental principles in government by the people. I am strongly in favor of a broadened commission form of government in Church and State. I believe that each of our secretaries should have a committee to consider with her, or with him, every new movement requiring money or life service, and I believe we will eventually come to this."

In a letter to Mrs. George Call, of Texas, she utters the same conviction, giving as her reason that frequent changes in the Council members had created a practically new body, which of necessity had thrown the responsibility of administration upon the secretaries:

"Do you realize that half, perhaps more than half, of the next Council will be new women? This leaves the work in the hands of a few old ones, largely, very largely, the office secretaries. I have struggled against this concentration of power for all these past years, as I know you will bear me witness, yet the odds seem continuously against me. An open policy and *every* woman

a chance to know the work, the missionaries, the fields, the problems, the needs and a voice—intelligent voice—in advancing and improving the work is what I believe we should have, and I mean to keep on struggling for it."

This excellent policy carried so large an educative influence that she could with all honesty declare: "The Woman's Missionary Society is the best mobilized arm of the Church." But the important law of character whereby every great virtue is beset with attendant danger was made clear when Miss Bennett's overzeal for group management sometimes created difficult situations for the administrative officers. Illustrative of these experiences was that which wrought complications in 1899, when the Parsonage Department was lifted out of the Executive Office and located with a Conference officer in New Orleans. Her quick recognition of such blunders, however, and loyal efforts to amend were so genuine that none held them against her, and often they seemed to create new bonds of sympathy.

Another policy for which she stood throughout her long public service was the sharing of responsibility in matters of official action. When traveling for the work she always sought a companion among either the Conference officers or the Council members, that she might have another viewpoint from her own. This view she expressed to one of the Secretaries of the Home Department on November 29, 1918:

"I don't want to go to Phoenix, but if you were going alone I should not hesitate. You know that I have always felt that it was neither wise nor right for one secretary or one member of the Council to decide on important matters where finances were involved, and with every passing year I am more and more convinced that for the sake of the workers, as well as the work, we must not encourage or permit such action."

She expresses the same thought in a letter to Miss Howell under date of June 9, 1920:

"I tried to get a room at Clifton Springs that I might return and meet you in New York for the meeting (the Interdenominational Committee on the Woman's Medical College at Shanghai), but everything was full and they were not sure they could do anything for me for several days. I wanted to be there in New York, for I never waver in my belief that the Master knew our human nature too well when he gave us that great lesson of sending out his disciples, two and two, to do the work he wanted done."

Miss Bennett was convinced that responsibility of leadership involved money-getting for conduct of the work. She preferred small gifts from each member of the organization to larger donations from the few, for the psychological effect upon the constituency. She continuously urged the law of *Stewardship* of time and money, that adequate support of the work might be assured by the regular membership. At the same time she sought to interest people of means in missionary enterprises, and often her absorption in this cause divine fascinated them and they gave generously. There were gifts from the Deerings, the Gaulbutts, the O'Fallons, the Hillmans, Mrs. Keener, the Sam Jones family, members of her own household, and a host of others; also legacies from Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Chenoweth, Major Toberman, Mrs. Follin and many, many more, because she interested people in the things into which she was pouring her life. Her efforts to secure coöperation in the great task of financing the work of the kingdom is revealed in this first message to the Council:

"Definite plans for enlarged offerings, annuities, and special gifts ought to be inaugurated at the first session of the Council. A standing committee to coöperate with the Department of Christian Stewardship should be appointed, whose duty it shall be to develop plans

by which every member of every congregation in Southern Methodism should be approached in a personal way on the subject of a special offering for the evangelization of the world. Prayer groups might be formed whose sacred privilege it would be to make daily intercession for certain individuals intrusted with wealth, whose names are listed, and from whom liberal offerings or bequests may be solicited."

The great celebration of the Centenary of Methodist Missions (1919-24) brought Miss Bennett new and very heavy responsibility. She was the one woman member of the Joint Commission of both Northern and Southern Methodism that planned the program. For two years before the date of the celebration she was in constant service on various committees, and when the Churches and Conferences were holding special celebrations she was daily on the platform, pleading for the spiritual message of the Centenary and making clear the great need for larger forces of men and money. She mustered the Woman's Missionary Societies into this great forward march with stirring messages:

"The Woman's Missionary Society is the best mobilized arm of the Church, and you members of this Council are the chosen leaders of your Conference organization. At your call twenty thousand trained women from the Adult and Young People's Auxiliaries could be ready in thirty days—to use that little dynamic sentence now so luminous with sacrificial love—ready to 'go over the top' in every congregation. You are the women called of God to lead in this great awakening of his sleeping forces. In all of these congregations there is a 'No-Man's Land,' where ignorance, indifference, and spiritual coldness keep silent watch. These must be won to a study of God's Word, to a close loving knowledge of our divine Leader's life, and to a passionate desire to walk in his footsteps. There must be a great league of prayer, prevailing prayer, undergirded with that humble confession of sin and disobedience that only a broken heart and a contrite spirit can make.

"There must be a great new conception of our stewardship to God if we would have fellowship with him in service. Money is one of his all-powerful agencies, but without ourselves, our love, our time, it may be made a curse. All things are possible with God, but it is only through man, through the Church, that God can do the impossible things for humanity. As I see it, the greatest task of this Council and its splendid constituency for the coming year, perhaps for the entire quadrennium, is to invest all of its God-given resources in a united effort with the trained and selected forces of the Board of Missions to make the Church a living power through which the Lord Jesus Christ shall speedily win the world to himself."

Again she urged hearty coöperation in the work which she believed would deepen the spiritual life of the Church:

"The Centenary Movement has quickened the heart of the Church until, with an ever-increasing faith in its God-given purpose, is becoming a great organized force, moving forward to make the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. Men, women, and children at home and abroad are keeping step in the great procession. Let us see to it that no member of our Woman's Missionary Society, from the youngest babe in the cradle to the oldest member of the last adult auxiliary, fails to become a link in the chain of intercession which must girdle the globe with power from the throne of God. Let us from this meeting make the great principles from which the divine movement is based—the fellowship of intercession, stewardship of time, talents, money, self, all we are and all we have—the study and practice of our entire membership during the next four years. Let us pay our tithe to the Lord, remembering that all we have and are belong to him, and then, rejoicing, let us bring the first fruits and the best of all we have as thank offerings and love offerings into his storehouse, that others may be glad and rejoice with us."

In 1919 the Board of Missions appointed Miss Bennett and Mrs. Luke Johnson as women members of a Commission of five sent out to inspect war-stricken Europe with a

view to establishing the Methodist Church where its spiritual message could help rebuild the nations. The beginning of work in Europe was made possible by the generous Centenary gifts specifically directed to war work. This Centenary work which fell into Miss Bennett's hands would have more than filled the life of an ordinary woman.

In the twenty-six years of this leadership of organized woman's work of the Church, Miss Bennett endured the physical hardship of continuous work and the mental and nerve strain of responsibility with a record unequaled by any other woman in the history of the Church. Her faithful secretary gives this account of her days when at home:

"After the morning lesson the mail was opened and read. Sometimes one letter alone required so much thought, and often prayer, that much of the morning would be given to it. When lunch was over, the work was again taken up; but when the little cuckoo clock on the wall struck two, she would invariably look up and say: 'Let's lie down for half an hour; I cannot hold my eyes open one second longer.' One half hour each day of rest was all that she could spare! The room was always darkened, and while she stretched across the canopied bed, I rested on the couch. Never once was the little ivory clock forgotten as she propped it up beside her that she might not oversleep! She sometimes did, when she had had a sleepless night, and then she chided me in a laughing way because I had not called her at the end of the half hour. She was an indefatigable worker. Many times when I was so tired and worn I could scarcely sit up, she was keenly alert and reluctant to stop at six o'clock. She often remarked that she had kept up that pace for so many years she had become accustomed to it. Some of her nieces frequently telephoned to take us for a ride through the beautiful blue-grass country, just to get her away from her work awhile. She enjoyed getting out in the open; but if a letter of importance demanded her attention, she could not be persuaded to leave."

The great physical tax of her railroad travel alone would have deterred a less devoted spirit, yet she spoke of it so

lightly only those who were closest realized the sacrifice involved. She lived at Richmond, Ky., a full day's journey by rail from Nashville, Tenn., the headquarters of the Board. The railroad connections were not always good, which often necessitated travel in the slow day coach. She worked more satisfactorily through committees and personal interviews than by correspondence, and therefore she was called continuously to Nashville. Often the committee meetings lasted several days and involved most fatiguing labor. As the work increased in volume and importance she traveled all over the country, "enduring hardships as a good soldier" so cheerfully that only a few knew that to her it had been "granted in behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer in his behalf."

For this sacrificial service she would never receive any monetary consideration. Indeed, in those first lean years in the Woman's Home Mission Board there were records of deficits when she and Mrs. Hargrove evened the accounts of the Board by their own personal gifts. It is true, appropriations were made for her travel and clerical help, but by her own insistence they meagerly measured to the cost of either. Her recompense was found in the joy of sacrificial service for God which bore fruit

"In minds made better by her presence,  
In pulses stirred to generosity,  
In deeds of daring rectitude."

The achievement of Miss Bennett in the established work of the Woman's Missionary Society was great, very great, but her largest contribution to the world and to the Church is the womanhood which she stimulated with a passion for the kingdom of God. This paragraph is a letter to the president of the Alabama Conference reveals her habit and method of quickening faith and zeal:

"Dear friend, don't fail to remember when you come to hard places or feel that you have not measured up to your own standard that you are simply treading the same path that every other conscientious woman who has gone that way had trod before you. Bless your dear heart, you are trying to obey the Master, and he was a man of 'sorrows and acquainted with grief.' "

Only an overburdened Secretary like Miss Mabel Howell could realize the cheer that a message like this could bring when the days are too short for current tasks:

"I wish you could look back on the years behind us, when, in our woman's work, the four or five of us had to organize all over the Church, and then keep up the baby organizations, largely, from the central offices. I know only too well the meaning of His blessed words: 'My power is made perfect in weakness.' Don't let me discourage you, dear; I am sure I won't, but you will never again, as long as you remain in the work, be free from heavy responsibility, nor cease to think of how much more you could do, if you were two persons, rather than one. I'm sure you will enjoy the old joke we so often tell on Mrs. Emily Allen Siler, who always did her work so well and so beautifully. Bishop Candler complimented her by saying: 'The only trouble with you is, you ought to have been born twins.' "

It was Miss Bennett's policy to keep the women of the Conferences informed concerning the developments of the different institutions, the work of the missionaries and deaconesses, through personal correspondence. Mrs. W. H. Pemberton, Little Rock, Ark., many years Corresponding Secretary of the Conference, expresses the inspiration this kindly consideration produced: "Her letters show her great heart and unflagging zeal in her Lord's work, also her humility with abiding faith in prayer. And was it not wonderful, her personal interest in every one of us who labored even in the least with her for the upbuilding of God's kingdom? I feel that she did inspire each one of

us to live closer to God and be more diligent for the salvation of men."

"She kept the individual woman and the group stirred with the conviction that the life of this age must be saturated with intercession," said another workfellow. Hear her as she challenges the new Woman's Missionary Council, in 1911, to carry forward the work of the women of the past whose achievements came through prayer:

"The greatest need of the Church of God to-day—our greatest need—is an absorbing spirit of prayer. The whole non-Christian world stands with wide-open doors before us in answer to those who have believed and prayed in the years gone by."

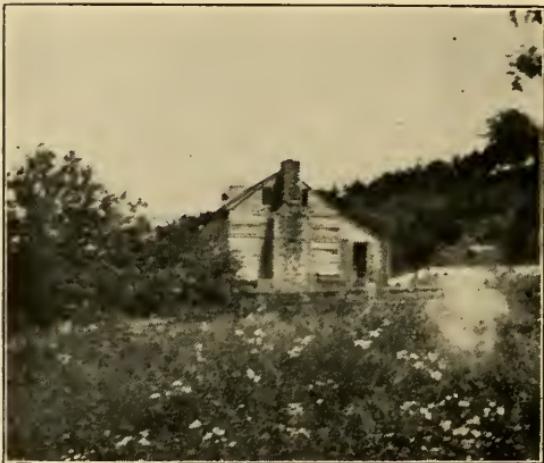
Hear her plead with the women of the Church for that communion which alone equips for service:

"Through the printed page and personal letter, from the platform and pew, in every Conference and auxiliary we have rung out the words of hope and entreaty: 'Double our membership, double our offerings, pray, work, give!' To these I would add: 'Double our prayer life, double our prayer life.' With humble dependence upon the Spirit of God and a steadfast determination to follow his leadership, we may go out from here calling upon all who are fellow workers with us to join in this larger and greater forward movement until it is the spirit and habit of the membership of the whole Church. I am asking no *easy* thing, but I *am* asking a *vital* thing. It has well been said: 'It is more difficult to pray for missions than to give to them.' Each and every one of us knows it is more difficult to pray for missions than to work for them. 'We can only really pray for missions if we habitually lead a life of prayer, and a life of prayer can only be led if we have entered into a life of communion with God.' It is ours to *abide* in this life and to come off more than conquerors in this time of the world's great need."





"PROVIDENCE." THE BRICK CHURCH MISS  
BENNETT JOINED IN 1875



THE "WATER MILL" WHERE MISS BENNETT  
DID HER FIRST MISSIONARY WORK

## CHAPTER IX

### A GOOD CITIZEN

It is a notable fact that Miss Bennett's long public ministry never robbed her of a sense of social and civic obligation nor of the joy of personal service. She frequently carried a "Line a Day" record of her personal activities, but unfortunately these records were intermittent, never running longer than three months a year, often only a few weeks. A glance through these fragmentary entries discloses the almost daily visit to some old person, to the sick or dying or some one in distress. They tell of encouraging some young person by personal interest in a trousseau or a "dress for a party." They reveal her at work in the local church as "training the children for Week or Prayer Service," "organizing an Epworth League," "presiding at the Woman's Missionary Society," at work with her Sunday school class, and other special Church services. These records show that the demands upon her time for local secular committee work would have filled the life of a woman of ordinary spirit. There was the "committee to devise plans for helping the indigent of the town to help themselves," the city "Hospital Board," participation in State and County educational matters and numerous other affairs that help develop good citizenship. She gave herself to charity work, seeking to stabilize character and rehabilitate families; failing these she had courage to lift the hopeless offender out of his setting and give him a new start in a changed environment. Few of her fellow citizens knew when she lifted a little white girl out of a home, hopeless of reform, and sent her away to school where she might have Christian education. None of her associates knew of the nameless black boy she took out of the squalor

of black bottom and gave a chance to make good. It was difficult to know if Miss Bennett was moved by divine impulse or by sheer human joy in these tender personal ministrations.

One catches a picture of her faith in the "infinite possibilities locked up in the human soul" in this incident related by Mrs. Mary Bruce Alexander:

"I stopped in Richmond one morning to see Miss Bennett, and as she greeted me she said: 'I know you have come in answer to prayer, and I want you to stay until to-morrow. There is an old woman dying of cancer over in the red-light district, and no one has been to see her or talk with her. I've been afraid to go alone.' Later in the day, after a prayer of preparation, we found the place; a beautiful girl opened the door for us. We talked, read the Scripture, and prayed; the old woman seemed truly glad to have our visit and expressed herself as believing. During the prayers the young girl cried aloud, and Miss Bennett put her arm around her and begged her to go home with us, but she could not leave the sick woman. Miss Bennett made an appointment with her to come to her house, but she did not come. Meanwhile Nancy died expressing faith in God, and months slipped by. A message came one day for Miss Bennett to visit a sick girl, who turned out to be the pretty girl we had seen at Nancy's. The physician said she had double pneumonia and would die unless removed to the hospital. The hospital was a private institution and would not receive fallen girls, but Miss Bennett's influence and money were powerful, and the girl was admitted, recovered, and returned to her family in another State."

Miss Lucia Burnam recalls among the many experiences of Miss Bennett's personal ministry one which reveals her discernment and quick action:

"While on the train once she overheard a conversation between a girl of about fifteen years of age and a man much older than herself, which led her to believe that the girl was being persuaded into something wrong.



MISS BELLE H. BENNETT WHEN SHE BEGAN PUBLIC  
SERVICE FOR THE WOMAN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY



She called the girl to her and after a long conversation persuaded her to get off the train at Richmond with her. Miss Bennett took her to her home for the night and telephoned to the home town and parents of the girl, who came for her next morning."

Miss Bennett radiated love and kindness and strength, and persons in trouble were attracted to her as by a magnet. They went away re-created by her hope and courage. This letter, found among her papers, testifies to her power of infusing a new spirit into those who need help:

"LITTLE ROCK, ARK., April 15, 1915.

"*Miss Bennett, City:* Most noble lady, last night will be one of the brightest of my life. I had become despondent and was meditating as to whether a misspent life was worth any use to continue. I have seen all sides of life, drank deep of the cup of folly and vice. I last night was wandering aimlessly in the city and saw the ladies going to the church; and, having heard of the conference of the good women of our God-blessed South, I went in and heard your more than helpful talk. And this morning the sun shines brighter and all nature seems different and I am a different man. And I expect to be there again this evening and as many times as I can. You will have in your crown on the last day one more star by coming to Little Rock. May the rest of your life be brighter and brighter and when you have crossed the mysterious river may you hear: 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter into the rest I have prepared for you.' This is the prayer of one you will never know."

Miss Bennett was an ardent advocate of the Federated Woman's Clubs of the country. She kept abreast of their high ethical movements wrought out in human betterment, legislative reforms, and law enforcement demands; she counted the educative and cultural values of their various sections of literature, music, art, and social diversions as making large contributions to the enrichment of modern life. Such national organizations as the Daughters of the

American Revolution and the Colonial Dames of America claimed her hearty support. She saw them fostering in the minds and hearts of posterity reverence for the virtues worthy of emulation of the great makers of this nation, through whom God gave to the world the "first political application of the Golden Rule embodied in the Declaration of Independence and wrought out in the Constitution." It was this interest in the human affairs of life which made secular pursuits sacred to her and enabled her to declare in her message to the Woman's Missionary Council in 1913:

"God's work is not done by the Church alone, and the last half century has seen the rise and development of interdenominational and undenominational organizations, clubs, leagues, unions, and orders devoted to all forms of humanitarian and definite Christian work. Church women everywhere are hearing and answering the appeal of these bodies; and if we cannot make it plain to the women of Southern Methodism that they can do as good work through the Woman's Missionary Society to advance the kingdom of God on earth as through any other channel, they will continue to join the ever-increasing ranks of those who belong to these non-Church societies."

Miss Bennett kept abreast of every modern national and international movement, and she was an indefatigable reader of the newspapers; it was a weary day when there were no newspapers available. Her attachment to the Louisville *Courier-Journal* was abiding, and her admiration of Henry Watterson's editorials and philippics unchanging even though they were frequently contrary to her own convictions. Her constant questions of the missionaries and deaconesses were: "Do you get the daily newspapers at your Wesley House? Do you read them?" If a negative reply was given, she asked the third question: "How can you know what is going on in the world, and how can you help if you don't know?" Of her it may be said, as it was of

Julia Ward Howe: "This was her world, whose business was her business so long as she lived in it."

It is not possible to consider the multiplied activities into which Miss Bennett led the women of the South without including the call to social service where their voices and agitation and corrective measures bore fruit. She was among the first to sponsor control of child labor by enactment of prohibitory law, and from its inception she threw her compelling personality into the National Child Labor Committee. As she held out the hand of the Church to reclaim and stabilize the character of the little unmarried mothers of the South in the Virginia Johnson Home and School in Dallas, she pointed out the larger field of fallen men and pleaded for a single standard of morality. She led the women into schools of inquiry concerning State laws on every moral issue. She pleaded with them to work for the abolition of legalized social evils that debauch and degrade man. That the women followed her gladly is shown by this paragraph in an address of 1908 at a meeting of the Woman's Board of Home Missions:

"This body, in behalf of the splendid constituency which it represents, has a number of times declared itself in unmistakable terms with regard to the iniquity of child labor, the liquor traffic, legalized prostitution, the convict lease system, and other kindred evils. But a formal declaration of intention is only the beginning of the work. 'Law is our highest educator,' and every local auxiliary in Southern Methodism ought conscientiously and courageously to promote the enactment and enforcement of righteous laws in both local and State government. One good law for the protection or betterment of the helpless, defective, or submerged classes, if faithfully enforced, will do more to change and ameliorate their condition than all the eleemosynary or philanthropic institutions that we could establish in a half century."

Such paragraphs ran throughout the years in her mes-

sages to the women of the Board which culminated in the splendid social service program which has distinguished the work of Southern Methodist women. Miss Bennett's sensitiveness to personal responsibility for moral issues in her own community was shown when she sold property that netted her good income because she feared narcotics were being sold in it. There was no way of knowing the truth, but her tender conscience would not permit her to profit by the gains of the property. This experience antedated many years the agitation and enactment of the anti-narcotic laws of the government.

Miss Bennett's magnetic personality drew to her side not only individuals who sought inspiration and courage for forward movements, but all manner of peoples and organizations honored her and sought counsel and advice from her. The one honor that pleased her most was this breaking through time-honored tradition and conferring upon her, the first woman so honored in the history of the institution, the degree of Doctor of Laws:

“SHELBYVILLE, Ky., June 3, 1916.

“Miss Belle H. Bennett, Richmond, Ky.

“*Dear Miss Bennett:* As Secretary of the Board of Education of Kentucky Wesleyan College, it becomes my duty and pleasure to notify you that the Board, at its session May 28, honored itself in conferring upon you the degree of LL.D.

“The Board realized that it was doing the unusual thing, but the members of the Board had an equally clear conviction that the degree was being conferred upon a very unusual person.

“With personal regards, I am, respectfully yours,  
J. P. STROTHER.”

Miss Bennett's work for the best and highest education of the young people in the South was not confined to the Church or to her missionary people. By pen and speech she coöperated with local and county schools of her own

beloved Madison County for better buildings and well prepared and better paid teachers. Her knowledge and skill were also called into requisition when the State moved in matters educational. Not six months before her death she related to her California friend, Mrs. Glide, who moved thence from Kentucky years before, the last enterprise to which she lent her aid:

"I was compelled to hurry home from New York as we were on the verge of an exciting political election in Kentucky. Our educators and school people have been for the last four years realizing that we needed two amendments to our constitution on the subject of State education. The first was that our State Superintendent of Education should be allowed to succeed himself, which he cannot do under the present law, and that his appointment should be either by the Governor, the Legislature, or a special Board of Education, appointed by the Legislature or the Governor. Three or four months ago Governor Morrow called over the telephone and asked me to go on that Board, which could only be nominal, until after the election took place; but he wanted to appoint it, selecting five Democrats and four Republicans that the State might realize that the effort was to take the educational work of the State out of politics. I didn't want to accept the place, but he urged it, and I finally consented. This has necessitated my giving some time to the effort to try to pass the amendments, although I felt from the beginning that the opposition was so great, from fear of an increase of taxes, and the propaganda had been made through the State for so short a time, they could not be passed at this election. The count is not yet quite completed, but we all feel very sure that they were defeated by a very big majority."

Miss Bennett was persuaded that the moral teaching of the Bible is fundamental to personal and national character, and she could not be satisfied with the small proportion of the children of the United States who were reached through the Sunday schools of the land or who had religious instruction in their homes. She believed that the book should be

taken to the childland of the country irrespective of creed. She was among the first of the nation who realized it could be done in connection with the secular schools. The following paragraph outlines her program:

"In every urban community within the bounds of our Southern Methodist Church, wherever there are one or more public schools, primary or high schools, and one or more Protestant Churches, the coöperation of these schools should be secured, a Daily Bible School Commission formed, and an earnest, well-trained Christian teacher or teachers employed, who shall give from four to five hours of Bible study weekly to all children whose parents will allow them to receive it. I can but believe that no more important or patriotic movement has ever claimed the attention of our Christian people."

The great World War wrung the heart of peace-loving people, but none suffered more than Miss Bennet did. She was sought for leadership by various national organizations in the work of mobilization and service as soon as the United States joined the Allies in their defense of world brotherhood. Her attitude concerning assuming official leadership herself is given in this excerpt from a letter of October 18, 1917, to her friend, Mrs. L. H. Glide, of Berkeley, Calif.:

"Scarcely a day passes that I do not have letters of appeal, almost of demand, from some of the numberless War Councils, urging that I devote myself to some or many of the war causes. Our people here at home, as all over the country, are working hard in the Red Cross work and, of course, I try to do my bit in various ways.

"I left home on the 17th of September for New York to attend a meeting of the Committee of the Union Woman's College at Nanking, China, in which we became one of the coöperating Boards three years ago.

"I remained in New York about a week, as I was a member of the War Council of the Young Woman's Christian Association, which was, also, to have a meet-

ing at that time. They offered to send me to France if I would take the job. I felt, however, that my place was here. The Master called us two thousand years ago to go with him into the trenches against the great hosts of heathenism, sin, and wickedness. I can't ask him to transfer me to another division of his great army just now, for I know only too well how much of the age-long suffering and terror still holds the dark lands in their grip."

Miss Bennett felt that the place the Church should fill in this world crisis was so vital that she was unwilling to leave any part of its work undone. She felt its force should be strengthened and its opportunity for world service magnified. While she would hold no official relation to the various war organizations, her influence through the South was great, as she urged the women of the Church and the missionary societies to throw full force of woman's power into the service by having part as individuals and joining in units of Red Cross work and working in Red Cross drives. She urged conservation of those values which could materially help in the upkeep of the armies. When the campaigns for Food Conservation, United War Work, Liberty and Victory bond sales, and other money-making movements were launched, she called upon the women to help and when possible to have part in the various plans for National Defense Councils.

Where there were cantonments in the South she pointed out to Methodist women the need of all services that mothers and sisters could render. The Hostess House in Texas where Methodist women led rejoiced her soul, and she gloried in the great number of Methodist women all over the country who filled men's places in the business world that they might be free for the service. Genuine gratitude filled her heart when she knew the Wesley Community Houses and the Bethlehem Houses had rendered national service as centers for every form of home war work

among foreign, Negro, and industrial communities. But her constant cry to Methodist womanhood was to keep up the morale of the Christian home and spiritual life of the Church that the nation might not suffer loss of its highest values. She read in this world tragedy the birth pangs of a new sense of brotherhood and sought to fire the heart of the Church with a deeper passion for service. Her message to Southern women in 1919 reads:

"Through the most inhuman and cruel war the world has ever known, a war claiming its sacrifice and service from the best manhood and womanhood of all the nations of the earth, governments and peoples, races and religionists have caught a deeper meaning in that God-inspired thought expressed by the Anglo-Saxon tongue in the brief words: 'The brotherhood of man.'

"The Every Man's Land of suffering, fear, and death opened wide its gates during the awful years of conflict to a world multitude that could only wait and watch and pray for a like multitude that waited and watched and suffered, in camp and trenches, in hospital and prison, while millions died upon the battle fields. Men and nations came nearer and nearer to each other through the heart anguish of those days, and the Spirit of God found the waiting hosts a great training school where souls could be taught to look beyond race and color into other souls and know that to the remotest parts of earth all mankind was one great brotherhood. There is no remission of sins without suffering; and through the gloom and darkness of those four long years of bloodshed Christianity has learned that the brotherhood of man can reach its full fruition only through a knowledge of the Fatherhood of that God who created man in his own image and the acceptance of Jesus Christ the Elder Brother as Redeemer and Savior of the world."

Among the great national victories for which Miss Bennett had worked and prayed long years was the prohibition of the liquor traffic, which added the eighteenth amendment, in 1919, to the Constitution of these United States. To the enforcement of this amendment she rallied the co-

operation of the constituency of the body she served as follows:

"It has been well said that 'the prohibition of the liquor traffic is the greatest moral victory the people of America have ever won,' a victory that is even now, in the first year of its achievement, bearing glad tidings of joy to the uttermost parts of the earth, a joy that will increase and grow as other nations and peoples put away from among them the unclean thing that has so long cursed the world.

"Our Federal government is making every effort to enforce the law; but here, as with the enforcement of every sumptuary law, a courageous, outspoken public opinion must sustain the appointed officers and demand the conviction of those who defy and break the law.

"The women of this Council and the splendid constituency they represent will not, cannot fail to do their full duty in every State and Conference in which Southern Methodism has planted a house of worship or erected a family altar to have this law enforced."

Her well-known stand on the principle of woman suffrage brought her opposition from recognized leaders of the Church throughout her long service at its altars. She knew she was right and had courage to press on and faith to believe right would prevail, although nearly a century of propaganda, prayer, and struggle was back of the suffrage movement. It was her high privilege to realize her vision and see this righteous measure carried in 1920, when the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States declared the enfranchisement of the women of the land. The enactment of this law was a religious victory she declared in her last address but one to the Woman's Missionary Council.

For all of these National issues she toiled in faith, and her reward is written in terms of accomplishment. Rarely does it fall to man's lot to see his visions come true as was granted to Belle H. Bennett.

## CHAPTER X

### THE APPEAL OF FOREIGN MISSIONS

WHEN the Woman's Missionary Council emerged from the two Woman's Boards of the Church, the work of the Foreign Department was facing a crisis demanding large vision and executive skill. In the thirty-two years of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society's existence, educational and evangelistic enterprises had been launched in five foreign nations despite the limited number of Church women who constituted its human source of revenue. Of a total membership of 99,626, only 66,204 were adults; the children and young people aggregated 33,422. Because of the magnificent growth of the work and its ever increasing ramifications, demands for maintenance alone exceeded the collections, which averaged two dollars and fifty cents per member. Larger buildings to house the work already established were needed in each field, while the change of location of McTyeire Institute in Shanghai, China, was imperative. In Mexico City a school of three hundred and fifty students was hopelessly cramped in a "hired house" of forty rooms. At Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, all forward progress was handicapped because of the inability to "hire" consecutively a house adapted to a large school program for Brazilian Methodists. Korea and Cuba were also presenting urgent needs that only money could supply. These were some of the outstanding demands of the foreign fields when Miss Bennett became President of the Woman's Missionary Council. It sent her in earnest quest to know God's will as to what he would have her do as leader of the women, and for guidance in activities which would begin to answer some of these Macedonian calls.

A larger source of revenue had to be secured. Only one-tenth of the women of the Church stood back of the organization; the nine-tenths must be induced to join the missionary societies. Immediately she raised the slogan, "Increase your membership," and the women caught the cry. At this time the two woman's societies were only federated; they were not organically united, but both departments of the Council earnestly pressed the plea for more members and more workers. Miss Bennett was convinced that if the faith of the women could be sprung to demand a million dollars, it could be raised within a year. Literature was created and sent through the membership, and earnest pleas for liberality were launched. Unfortunately the Church had not yet adjusted itself to the reorganization of the woman's work, and in some quarters confusion concerning suggested *per capita* amounts to be raised frustrated this first great call of the new Council. The fullness of time for this forward movement had not yet arrived. Miss Bennett's faith and purpose did not waver notwithstanding the disappointment in this venture. A remarkable quality of Miss Bennett's leadership was her continuous forward look no matter how great her disappointment. She lost no momentum by repinings or unprofitable regrets. When her plans failed, mistakes were made or her own actions met with criticisms, she forgot them and pressed forward to other tasks.

Her statesmanship was apparent when she and the Foreign Secretary authorized the change of location of McTyeire Institute in Shanghai, China, though the conditions of the treasury seemed to forbid. The business section of the city was encroaching upon the property, and the move seemed a matter of business sagacity. Promises of local Chinese made initial steps possible, and the faith Miss Bennett inspired in the women of the Council accomplished the rest.

Again Miss Bennett's statesmanship was demonstrated when she led the women to realize that the building of a woman's college at Rio de Janeiro was the most pressing demand before the Council and first to be answered. It took the courage of conviction to persuade the women of the Council to rally to this proposition, for the cost of property far exceeded that of any school enterprise in the past and, viewed from the financial side of the organization at that time, was prohibitive. The condition of the treasury of the Foreign Department and the fact that the membership at large had not been consulted developed opposition in the Board of Missions, and the women were urged to postpone action until at least one hundred thousand dollars had been collected for the enterprise. Miss Bennett would not have been human had she not suffered at this delay when she believed this school vital to the work of the Protestant Church in a great republic of fifteen million people. With this conviction she continued to press the matter upon the women of the Church until the money was collected. At the request of the Council Miss Bennett visited Brazil to investigate the woman's work and select the site for this school at Rio. Her letter of October, 1913, to Mrs. Waller Bennett pictures the labor and responsibility involved:

"For years we have had a girls' school in Rio but no property of our own, and it has been impossible to secure permanent rented quarters. Our chief and most difficult business in South America is housing this school. In company with Miss Glenn and Miss Perkins, principal of the school, we have been property hunting night and day for two weeks in a very real and exhausting way in the day time and at night in our dreams. Property is as high-priced here as in New York or Chicago, yet we must have good property and in the best residential section of the city. None of the old mansion houses are suitable for school buildings, yet they are too good to buy and pull down. We have

found one place that we may possibly be able to get at \$217,000, and have written back to the Board at Nashville an elaborate description of the same asking directions as to buying. It belongs to three heirs and has a good large dwelling on it, but the price is staggering. It is in a fine location though not on the Bay front, but the house now on it would be only the beginning of a school plant. We asked for a cable message in reply to our letter to the Board, but our letters will not reach Nashville before the first of November. We are still house hunting, for neither of us feels willing to go home until this old school problem is settled. The Northern Methodists retired from this territory in our favor, and we feel that we have neglected the opportunity. We have something more than one hundred thousand dollars for the purchase, but to buy the property about which we have written means an additional \$200,000 before the plant is completed and equipped. We certainly do feel the responsibility, yet this is largely why we came out."

Beautiful property was finally purchased after Miss Bennett's return to the United States and the school opened its doors March, 1921. In high appreciation of the service of the Council President whose zeal hastened its establishment it bears the name Bennett College.

Something of the appeal of the woman's work for women in Brazil is set forth in her description of laying the foundations for the new school building at Ribeirao Preto:

"Ribeirao Preto is the capital of the great coffee-growing section and is called the 'coffeepot' of the world. We have had the location for a school building here for some years, almost an entire square in the best part of the city. It has trebled in value since we bought it. Miss Gibson and I spent days and nights with the missionaries over the building plans, which I had with me, and on Sunday night before we left marched with our little congregation of Methodists (the Brazilian presiding elder and the American pastor), after services at the church, to the lot, and under the starlight, with the Southern Cross above us, dedicated the ground and authorized the erection of a new \$50,000

building. The proceeding was very spectacular, but the people are so accustomed to this, from the Church of Rome, they like it and want it. The old members especially, all of whom we had to tell briefly of the early days and their hard struggles, were very happy over the occasion.

"We have a very prominent railroad man as a leading member of our Church at this place. His father was an Englishman and his mother a Brazilian, and it was a real pleasure to see how this man enjoyed our visit to the place. He couldn't do enough for us. He has a beautiful home, but his wife, a Brazilian woman educated in England, was in Rio on a visit. He kept us supplied with flowers, took most of his meals with us, studied and corrected the plans with us (he is a civil engineer), and finally sent us back as far as Campinas in his private car."

This visit to Brazil was the first Miss Bennett made to the foreign fields where Southern Methodist women were at work. It opened her eyes to the dearth of literature for spiritual cultivation in countries new to evangelistic Churches. At the next meeting of the Council she made this appeal for the creation of Christian literature, which bore fruit in the immediate appropriation of moneys for this purpose for Brazil and other fields:

"We can no longer neglect or fail to give our converts and adherents on the foreign mission fields some well-selected Christian literature. The meager supply for our people in the great Portuguese-speaking republic of Brazil is a genuine reproach to us. Other fields are equally destitute. One book each year, translated and put within the reach of the thousands of boys and girls who attend the schools of the Southern Methodist Missions, would be an immeasurable blessing, reaching out to homes and hearts the present working force cannot touch. Surely we owe this to the women and men who are working with us in the regions beyond."

For more than twenty years the physical and spiritual conditions of the peoples of Africa in the Congo valley

burdened Miss Bennett's heart. Long she prayed for them; she talked much about the shame of the twentieth century world civilization that sat in apathy and lifted not a hand to ease their burdens or flood them with *Truth* that should make them free from this bondage of ignorance and suffering. When Bishop Lambuth went to the Belgian Congo in 1910, she followed him with a sympathy and assurance of intercession no others outside his own family could have given. When he and Prof. J. W. Gilbert wrote her concerning their travels and observations of the suffering womanhood of Africa, her heart was melted within her. One of Bishop Lambuth's strongest appeals to her was written December 24, 1911, and wound up with this heart cry:

"How long will it be before the spell which Satan has woven about these poor people shall be broken? For centuries they have been in bondage to fear. It would seem as though no one had the courage to break through and deliver from that which has bowed them to the earth and left them helpless and without hope. It was only this morning a native said to me: 'How is it that the Belgian government sent officers to control the country and the Roman Catholic priests came to open missions and your Church waited so long to send missionaries when you say the gospel you bring teaches that Jesus and not Mary is the only way to Nzambe?'—their word for God. What could I say? Surely it were high time we were giving some proof of our sincerity in saying we are working under a commission to preach the gospel to every creature. I appeal to the women of the South to do for the women of Africa what is being done for those who have been more favored in other mission fields. I have now had an opportunity to probe this 'open sore' to the depths after twenty years in the Orient and many visits to Cuba, Mexico, and Brazil, and I unhesitatingly assert this is the place of the world's greatest need. If Christian Missions means to us what we have always defined such an evangel to be from the platform and from the press, then we will do what the Moravians have ever done—find out where

the need is greatest and go where we are needed most. You may recall the fact of my having an interview with Henry M. Stanley just twenty years ago. It was soon after his rescue of Emin Pasha. He expressed himself vigorously in favor of missionaries from the Southern States, saying they understood the Negro better than any other people, and added the significant statement that we had no time to lose. I interpret the last in the light of my present visit as referring to the Moslem advance, the Roman Catholic occupation in Uganda and later in the Congo valley, and last but not least the wonderful respect with which the Negro holds the white man."

When the Council was in session in Washington in April, 1912, Miss Bennett told of this greatest need of the world and in deep humility added the story of her own call to serve Africa in her home town and God's wonderful blessing upon her own heart and her colored friends in her Bible study class. As she concluded her speech a note was handed her which read: "Miss Bennett, I am willing to start work in Africa with five thousand dollars. (Signed) L. H. Glide."

Later Miss Bennett made the announcement of the gift, and the following resolution, signed by fifteen persons, was offered and unanimously adopted:

*"Resolved,* That the Woman's Missionary Council in annual session at Washington, D. C., send a communication to the Board of Missions in its annual session, May 1, assuring it that if it decided to open work in Africa the women will coöperate."

The Board of Missions did accept the challenge and planned to enter the Belgian Congo, but because of the cruel World War it was impossible for the missionaries to sail the high seas until August, 1917, and even at that date the responsibility of the journey was left entirely with them. The Foreign Secretary's account of their heroism states:

"With firm faith and trust in God, feeling secure in his protection, they chose to answer his call to Africa and unfalteringly undertook the voyage in the face of the dangers of travel at this time, knowing that only a few weeks before a boat had been lost on a mine in Cape Town Harbor, carrying down with it a number of missionaries." Miss Bennett lived to rejoice in the beginning of a Girls' Home, a Day School, and a Hospital at Wembo Nyama, and regular evangelistic service of the Church in the outlying villages.

One of Miss Bennett's statesmanlike accomplishments was bringing the women of the Church into coöperation with the plan for redistributing the evangelical work in Mexico. Since 1872 twelve missionary boards had prosecuted Protestant Missions in fifteen of the thirty states of Mexico. When the revolution of 1910 caused the United States government to recall its citizens from the country, the Mission Boards were forced to suspend operations until normalcy might be established. In this interim the Secretaries and representatives of the various Boards gathered at Cincinnati to study scientifically the results of the forty years of missionary endeavor in Mexico. It was made clear that denominations had overlapped in fifteen states, while by failure of comity and coöperation there were fifteen others in which little or no evangelistic work had been done. Again, it revealed great unoccupied fields among the five million Indians for whom neither the Roman Catholic nor Protestant Churches were working. It was determined that, when peace should be established and the missionaries returned, each Church should be allotted territory as obtains in the Orient and other mission fields. Agreements concerning the redistribution were so made that every State should have Protestant missions; and plans were perfected for interchange, purchase, and sale of properties conditioned upon concurrence of the Boards at work in

Mexico. Miss Bennett's sympathetic support of these measures was most valuable in the initial meetings.

The work of securing the coöperation of her own Church was far more difficult than had been expected. Some of the older missionaries of Mexico could not tolerate the thought of separations from people won by their earnest endeavors, and they believed an exchange of any properties would entail sacrifice. Denominational adherence seemed destroyed by the uniform name, *Evangelical Church of Mexico* followed by *Methodist Branch* in brackets; they could not believe it carried a stronger Protestant appeal than the mere denominational title. Three of the bishops of the Church also were vigorous in their opposition, and there was long and earnest debate concerning the Southern Methodist Church's participation in the plan of redistribution and acceptance of the territory allotted. Miss Bennett's splendid personality and clear vision of the wisdom of the course added greatly to the final concurrence of the General Conference, in 1918, in the plan.

When civil strife was sufficiently adjusted for normal life to be resumed in Mexico, the Woman's Missionary Council returned her missionaries to the section of the country allotted to the Southern Methodist Church. Mexico loomed large in Miss Bennett's already overfull life when the Council began reconstructing programs of work, repairing property injured by devastation of war, and planning for new buildings made possible by the Centenary gift. A definite policy of normal school work to meet the opportunities of the new day in Mexico; the introduction of new work along lines of social evangelism in plants to be known as *Centro Cristianos*; distinctive women's evangelistic work through the Volunteer movement, with specific preparation in Bible study and the establishment of a Conference Woman's Missionary Society in the Mexican Church as member of the Woman's Missionary Coun-

cil, are easily traced to Miss Bennett's splendid guidance. Ten years of the twelve in which she was President of the Woman's Missionary Council, Mexico was in civil strife, and the suspended missionary activities for a number of years prevented her visiting the work, but her regard for Latin America and high appreciation of the work accomplished in Mexico created a strong appeal to her sympathy for the country. She saw in the earnest zeal of the reconstructed Church and the evangelistic spirit of the young women great promise of a future of gospel power in Mexico.

The organization of the Woman's Missionary Society by native converts in all the mission fields where the Council maintains work was a natural and happy development of their spiritual life. Only as their new faith discovered its relation to life could there be growth, and to Miss Bennett it was high joy to turn this devotion into constructive channels. The official members of these young missionary societies in foreign countries were not mere names on the roster of the Woman's Missionary Council to her, but real personalities who could realize the highest idealism. For this reason she urged that whenever possible some representative should attend the Council meetings, that they might catch the glow of enthusiasm which radiates from gatherings of this character. Every event that gave hope of a richer, larger womanhood to the world was welcomed as a potential promise of what woman may become in the world's ongoing. The fostering of this missionary spirit in the women converts of other nations was twofold in its appeal to her. That they might hasten the kingdom of God was first and always the cause of her burning zeal, but that woman might come to her rightful place in the world's history was no less her ever-present desire.

At the annual meeting of the Council in 1915, at Little

Rock, the Board of Missions made overtures to the women to take over the Bible Woman's Work and Kindergarten Training School in Japan, which had been the work of Mrs. J. W. Lambuth. Because of insufficient financial support it had not expanded as was desired. Miss Bennett most earnestly advocated its acceptance, even though it meant entering a new mission field, for the women had not conducted work in Japan. By this time the faith of Methodist womanhood in Miss Bennett's visions and in her powers of generalship was so complete that they promptly voted to enter Japan:

"We recommend: 1. That the Woman's Missionary Council assume the support of woman's evangelistic work in Japan on condition that the Board of Missions continue its usual appropriation to that field. 2. That the Council appoint two new missionaries to that field."

Within five years Miss Bennett had led Southern Methodist women into two new mission fields, and like the "widow's cruse of oil" the finances were never taxed beyond the power of the treasury—the money multiplied as there was need. The following paragraph of a letter to Miss Esther Case, Secretary of the Council's work in Latin America, dated November 8, 1921, reveals her eye turned to other small nations where she longed to present the "better hope through which we draw nigh unto God":

"I saw a good deal of Mr. Sam Inman while we were at Mohonk, and he is most enthusiastic about the progress of Protestant Christianity, in Mexico especially, and the other parts of South America. He and I are both very anxious for our Boards to go into *Central America*. I am truly sorry that I have not talked with Bishop Cannon on this subject now that he will have a new field. I will wait for the next Bishop and see if he happens to be a man who can really take hold of either old or new situations."

Miss Bennett's skill in locating mission institutions was

recognized by all who knew her methods or policies. Her Lord's work was too great to be located on side streets, and the light it must shed forth was far too necessary to be 'hidden under a bushel.' When the Woman's Missionary Council was planting a new and larger school than it had maintained in Cuba she gave utterance to her conviction concerning strategic locations in a communication addressed to Miss Case, July 14, 1919:

"Now, dear Secretary, may I say to you concerning Havana, as I have said about Rio and Shanghai, let us make a real effort to take these cities for our Lord Jesus Christ? Methodism has always retreated from the cities. Our big schools and our best missions are generally located in villages, towns, or even hamlets. Now in these three cities into which we are entering with largely increased force, let us establish a good big Central School and as soon as we can, open half a dozen or more strong day school feeders in the same city to the Central School. Let us also organize a League of Prayer, a special League, I mean, of those women that we know are praying women and in communion with God, for the outpouring of his Spirit, upon these institutions and these cities, and we can and will claim and take them for our Lord."

Miss Bennett's regard for the various mission fields was impartial, but when there were great crises in any nation it was but natural that she should give earnest, absorbing attention to that one. This was true when the great, hoary Manchu Dynasty was overthrown and China came out to the world in the clothing and coloring of a new democratic republic. It was a wonderful day in the history of nations, and it was a grave responsibility and high privilege to be the leader of the forces that carried that fundamental power to that great people which alone could make them free, and equal and happy. Miss Bennett's annual message, April, 1912, to the first meeting of the Council after this historic event, sounds this bugle call to the Church of God:

"In China Protestant Christianity faces the most tremendous problem and the most tremendous opportunity it has ever known. An Oriental people with an ancient and fixed civilization, an autocratic government, and an immense illiterate population in bondage to pagan religions have suddenly awakened to their backward place in the family of the nations and have adopted a republican form of government. With a strong, progressive, and patriotic leadership keenly alive to the power, possibilities, and needs of the people, China is eagerly seeking Western learning and Western forms of progress as they exist in lands and among people dominated and leavened by the Christian religion.

"We rejoice in the belief that missionary work, missionary schools, missionary teaching and influence in all of their manifold forms have been, under God, the greatest factor in producing this rebirth of a nation. But the question comes to us now as a missionary Council: What more can we do? What larger part can we take in the reformation and Christianization of this great people? Religious freedom has been declared through the new constitution, and a nation-wide public school system is being developed. The Minister of Education has issued a decree that 'free education is to be provided throughout China for all children, girls as well as boys, up to ten years of age,' and it is estimated that one million schools will be required to accommodate these children of school age. Where will China get her teaching force? Will Southern Methodism furnish her proportion of really Christian teachers, or will she turn aside from this open door and leave non-Christian Japan to form the next generation of Chinese thought and character?

"Our missionaries have been pleading for day schools and women evangelists who can go into the country villages or wherever groups of women may be gathered together and teach the 'all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' China's modernization demands the 'all things' of Christ, or her end may be worse than her beginning. We must do our part. We must respond now! Now is the time of our greatest opportunity. Other nations may wait. China will not, cannot wait."

That Miss Bennett "dwelt beside the very springs of life" cannot be questioned, for she was ever in advance of

the constituency of the Woman's Missionary Council, not only with vision but with plans for making real that which came to her heart and mind through faith. New China's demand for schools and millions of teachers had scarcely taken hold of the thought of the Western world when she was praying and planning for a teacher-training school in China, where the best pedagogical preparation built upon the principles of Christ might be given. Day and night she dreamed of this large thing. In 1916 she went to the Orient in company with the Foreign Secretary of the Council, with the purpose of making this Christian Normal School a feature of the woman's work in China. The Laura Haygood School at Soochow, named for the beloved missionary who was one of Georgia's greatest teachers before going to China, furnished the best opportunities for inaugurating her plans. There were certain circumstances attendant upon the introduction of this normal feature in connection with this institution, which but for Miss Bennett's habit of looking forward would have marred her joy in bringing her dream into reality. Time has proved the wisdom of this selection; for notwithstanding the confusion incident to repeated revolutions and civil strife in this new republic, the Laura Haygood Normal School continues its work of making Christian teachers.

Miss Bennett's great faith in the power of Christian education was strengthened as she met the men and women who had their training in the mission schools of China, Japan, and Korea. The need of industrial and trade schools, for Korea especially, pressed heavily upon her sympathies. She gave authorization for such an institution at Wonsan by appointing a committee to study the situation and work out details for its conduct. Her belief in the need of a good medical college for women in China was confirmed by what she saw in that great country, and she returned to America with fixed determination that such an institution

should become the Christian Western woman's contribution to the relief of Eastern woman's human needs. The Bible woman's work of the Orient was second to none in its personal presentation of the Christ, but it was manifest to her that better preparation must be given these evangelists of love. "In material things Japan is making a new land of Korea," she declared, "and the Christian forces must keep well abreast of this material progress." The Lambuth Memorial Bible Woman's School at Kobe, Japan, appealed to her because of its noble work of the past, and she returned home to plead for proper housing of that institution. At Oita the Kindergarten Training School was strengthened and promised better facilities. She was persuaded that the Christian settlement, like the Wesley Houses in the home field, with their varied forms of Christian social activities, was needed in the great Oriental cities, where native and foreign Christians may more perfectly share the life of the community. Her plea for the establishment of these evangelistic centers was thus expressed at the Council meeting in 1917:

"The Orient is wide open to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; in China, Korea, and Japan every method of approach to the people can be made effective that has proved effective in our own land. Community work, with all the activities known to our Christian social service workers, is needed in the cities and towns of those countries; and we must meet the opportunity with enlarged faith and more effectual prayer. We can do it. God is always waiting and ready if we are obedient and willing."

Miss Bennett lived to realize her dream of this great evangelistic center in Seoul and to know that in Japan and China God was using Christian settlements to enrich the characters of the people with whom they touched life.

A policy Miss Bennett advocated as fundamental to character development was throwing the support of the

Church in mission fields upon the converts at as early a date as possible. She made it her principal theme at meetings in Brazil and in the Orient, especially in the gatherings of the women of the missions. She cautioned the Board of Missions and the Woman's Missionary Council not to paralyze the zeal of converts and students by paying for everything with foreign money.

Miss Bennett's desire for a change in the educational policy of the woman's work, which looked forward to the building of Christian families on mission fields, was as broad as it was basic. She gives expression to this conviction in her plea to the women in 1916:

"One of the needs looming larger and larger before us on the foreign field during the past decade has been the establishment and support of more intermediate and high *schools for boys*. The organization of Woman's Missionary Societies, at a time when their efforts were restricted to work among women and children, led to a world-encircling chain of schools for girls and small children. This has increased until the primary and grammar school for girls greatly outnumber the same class of Christian schools for boys. It was stated at the Congress on Christian Work in Latin America by Dr. Cook, the Foreign Secretary of our Board, that in three Latin countries where our Church has work there are five schools for girls to one for boys, approximately seven girls in school to one boy, and ten dollars to one in favor of girls' schools.

"It has been the policy of our woman's work from the beginning to admit boys up to twelve years of age into the schools under its supervision; but often this has not been possible; generally it has not been advisable.

"Now, if the Christian family is the unit of Christian civilization, the Mission Boards are failing in a plain and vital duty. Marriage is practically obligatory, and at an early age, for all girls in non-Christian lands. A few years ago when I visited an old and well-known orphanage, established and controlled by the Church of Scotland, in Palestine, to my question, 'What is the most encouraging thing that has come to you as Christian missionaries during the past twelve months?' the answer

was: 'Two of our girls have refused to be married because they would not be married to Mohammedan men.' In every foreign mission field that I have visited the girls educated in mission schools must go back into the same surroundings, the same atmosphere from which they were taken, because they must marry men who know nothing of Christ or Christianity. Is it not time that we catch a vision of homes and families in these lands where Jesus reigns and rules, rather than just of the girl or woman who has had an opportunity to know and love him in the schoolroom?

"May I not urge that you earnestly and prayerfully consider a change in policy and make a beginning in the establishment of schools for boys?"

It was in her relation to the missionaries that Miss Bennett's great wisdom as a leader was revealed. She was insistent that they should not go to the fields until they were "skilled workmen for the Lord," and that they should be women of culture and broad personality, that they might command the mental and social respect of the peoples to whom they were sent. "A sentimental conception of missions will never tend to the selection of the best material for foreign or home fields nor prepare a woman for either," she affirmed. But above these gifts and accomplishments she required that they should be women of vital religious experience, sustained by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, with absolute faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ and burning passion for the salvation of souls. "With all my heart I agree with you on the subject of our securing Spirit-filled women for both home and foreign fields. I do not care what their education is, or what their personality may be, unless the Spirit of God works in and through them, they cannot lead others to Christ," she wrote a friend in 1919.

Miss Bennett's human sympathy with the missionaries in their inevitable trials and struggles gave her a tenderness and consideration for them that far outdistanced official

responsibility. She demanded consideration for their physical care always, as is shown by this ruling in her message to the Council in 1914:

"The first requisite for our missionaries on furlough is *rest, supervised rest*. Our policy of having or allowing missionaries who are at home for a furlough to itinerate through the Conferences as field workers has been an exceedingly expensive luxury. We have had women come home with depleted vitality, needing rest and possibly medical attention, and we have itinerated them for a few months or a few weeks with nervous systems wrought to the highest tension, and they have returned to their missions invalids—perhaps for life—a burden to their overworked fellow missionaries, unable to meet requirements, yet unwilling to leave the field, holding a place that a new and stronger worker ought to occupy, victims of our mistake! The very best are most often sacrificed to this Moloch of missionary education.

"Attendance on the annual meeting of her own Conference Society and of this Council session should be the required itineration of a worker on furlough. Anything beyond this should be by permission of a carefully selected committee having the oversight of workers while at home."

Messages like this to Miss Mary Lou White, home from China, whose broken health was evidence of long days of overwork, show her understanding sympathy:

"I hope you will not get discouraged because of the 'off days,' for it is only too true that the nervous system, when once broken down, takes a long time to build up again. We have found, for years past, that it is very difficult to get the Church people, and the home people too, to understand that rest and physical, mental, and spiritual refreshing are the important things connected with every missionary's furlough period. Of course, they come home to see and be with the dear ones, but that is often made a taxing part of the home visit. The Church people, of course, always want to see and hear one coming back from the field; and when a

young woman stands before them and talks interestingly and with apparent ease, they do not understand at all that it may be a very serious draft on her whole nervous system. One of our strong fine women from South America came home for her second furlough looking well and quite vigorous. She thought that she was quite able to answer all the calls that were made on her. She told me she made more than a hundred public talks while she was at home. She was never quite equal to the work after she went back to the field and was so lacking in self-control she was a tax on the other members of the mission. I am telling you this because I know you will be urged to speak in public and do a great many things that will tax your strength to the uttermost. Don't yield to it unless you yourself feel physically equal to it."

She was ambitious for the intellectual development of these women ambassadors of her King and pleaded that they might be given opportunities for study, as this passage from an address reveals:

"Every normal missionary wants and needs this study. This she should have when the medical director considers her physically equal to it. This also should be under the direction of the Furlough Committee, that the best institution may be selected for each woman and her studies so related to the work she goes out to do that the best returns for the expenditure of strength, time, and money will be assured."

She tried to stimulate her younger sisters on the field to be ready for leadership when it should be thrust upon them. This paragraph to one in China shows her forward look:

"Try to take care of your health; for since you have gotten the Chinese language and know the people, you ought to have years before you in which you can do your best work among them. Time will make many changes among those who did this splendid pioneer work in the next few years, and the younger women will be compelled to step into place of leadership."

What a spiritual quickening a message like this would be to a young worker in the far-away Orient:

"With every morning life has a new beginning and to me the apostle's wonderful words, 'redeeming the time' (Eph. 5:16), have given me the strength and courage to go from one hard thing to another, knowing that he who loves us, as only God can love, will be with us and help us, even though we make mistakes."

For the older missionaries, those who blazed the trail for other Southern Methodist women in foreign fields, she held the tenderest reverence. A sentence like this to Miss Nannie Holding, after describing in detail the progress of the institution she founded on the Mexican border, discloses something of this high appreciation:

*"Dear Miss Holding: With God you laid the foundation of a wonderful work for Mexico at Laredo, on which others are still building, and the increase is still being given. A Paul may plant, an Apollos may water, but God giveth the increase."*

Hundreds of such letters found their way to "regions beyond." In her last illness Miss Bennett said to a friend: "If I had just known as a young girl what I know about missions now, I believe I should be in India to-day." His response, "You are in India to-day, Miss Belle; and not only in India but in China and Japan, and even the uttermost parts of the earth, because of your influence upon those you have sent out," tells the story of her answer to the vision of the kingdom won by Christ and those working with him "delivered to God, even the Father."

## CHAPTER XI

### FOREIGN TRAVEL

MISS BENNETT was fond of foreign travel and was indefatigable in sight-seeing. The manners and customs of people of the world, their art and architecture, and their historical monuments and inscriptions, deeply interested her. In 1890 she traveled in Europe during the summer months with her brother, Mr. Waller Bennett, her niece, Miss Lizzie Bennett, who married Mr. Evan McCord later, and Miss Eliza Sharp (afterwards Mrs. Bennett Young), of Louisville, Ky.

There are no available letters or descriptions of this visit to Europe, but a brief line-a-day journal emphasizes some things she greatly appreciated. These notes reveal her keen interest in the great cathedrals of the different cities and her enjoyment of the great art galleries, especially her pleasure in Murillo's pictures and Michelangelo's "Wonderful Moses." The ancient world became very real to her when she visited the Pantheon in Rome, built twenty-seven years before Christ, the Forum Romanum and the Colosseum on the Appian Way. One entry in her journal says: "I went up the Santa Scala, a flight of one hundred and twenty-seven steps, from the Palace of Pilate at Jerusalem which our Lord is said to have climbed, brought to Rome by Empress Helena 326 A. D." That her thoughts were absorbed with historic sights this sentence makes clear: "In the afternoon we took carriages and drove over the city; I was bitterly disappointed in seeing new Rome when my mind was so full of the old."

She went to Oberammergau to witness the Passion Play, of which she makes this record:

*"August 5.—Reached the hotel yesterday in time to take a hurried lunch and catch the train for Oberamergau. It rained all the way, and we arrived about 10 P.M. We were assigned rooms in the homes of the cottagers, very simple but tolerably clean. Rainy and cold to-day. The Tutts called at noon, and we walked with them to see the amphitheater and the statue given the village of Ludwig. A quaint little town with about fifteen hundred people, most of them wood carvers. Spent part of the afternoon reading the libretto. The old man of our cottage personates Barabbas; the woman the mother of Tobias. Could not keep the mean little feather beds on me last night."*

*"August 6.—Our seats good, and although sick sat through the whole day and watched the impersonation of that awful tragedy. I think the human Christ will be more before me now. It is a religious ceremony to these simple-hearted people and deeply impressive to all who may see it with right spirit. The tableaux and costumes are wonderful. The crucifixion seems awful. We left at the close and arrived at Munich about 11 P.M."*

Miss Bennett's account of her visit to Kaiserwerth, the home of Pastor Fliedner, who introduced the work and office of deaconess to the modern Christian Church, is particularly interesting in view of the fact that she was largely responsible for the creation of the office of deaconess in her own Church twelve years later:

*"Eliza Sharp and I ran early and took the train for Kaiserwerth, three hours' ride from Cologne. Reached a little station out in the woods; no one could speak English, but a deaconess and five or six children got off the train, and we explained to her and walked with her nearly two miles to the Mother House. We were conducted by an English-speaking deaconess through the different departments, the hospital, orphanage, etc. Finally we called to see Pastor Diesseldorf, son-in-law to Fliedner the founder; we were told that eight hundred women were at work from Kaiserwerth. A great and wonderful institution. A beautiful statue of Emperor Frederick stands in front of the Children's Hospital."*

The Methodist Ecumenical Conference was held in 1901 in London. On July 13, 1901, Miss Mary Helm and Miss Bennett sailed on the steamship *Weisland* as representatives from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Miss Bennett having been invited to speak at the Woman's Session of the Conference. Mrs. Hugh Price Hughes, of London, presided at this meeting, and Miss Bennett's name appeared second to the last on the program. After they were seated on the platform another American delegate came to her, saying: "Mrs. Hughes has agreed to exchange our places. You will speak second from first and I in the place allotted you." It was most irritating to be manipulated after this fashion when it was impossible to protest. When Miss Bennett was moved to determination she had a way of throwing her chin outward. No report of this meeting or copy of Miss Bennett's address is available, but Miss Helm's account lingers in the memory of many of Miss Bennett's friends: "Belle threw her chin in the air and never spoke so well," she said. With a chuckle she continued: "Every speaker was given ten minutes, and when that other American spoke over her time Mrs. Hughes stopped her. She protested, saying, 'I haven't begun my speech yet'; to which Mrs. Hughes replied: 'Then you shouldn't have been so reminiscent.'"

Miss Bennett and Miss Helm took advantage of this visit to England to study the Wesleyan deaconess movement and the various missions of London. Their diligence in studying these institutions in the interest of their Lord's work was commented upon by many who were privileged to meet them in London. To Mrs. J. C. Lewis, wife of the Principal of Sue Bennett Memorial School, herself English born and reared, Miss Bennett writes from London, England, August 22, 1901, concerning their life while abroad:

"I was so glad to get your good letter when I reached London, just a week ago. We are hungry for home

letters and feel quite neglected if we do not get two or three a week. We have enjoyed our trip and tried to travel leisurely, but there is so much to be seen, so much that we feel we ought to see, that night usually finds us very tired. Our voyage was so long that we did not get much of Keswick, and I think did not get into the spirit of the meeting as we did at Northfield last year. There was much of blessing in it, however, and it is certainly a great gathering of the Lord's people. The air of reverential worship and the singing of a great English audience is far beyond anything we see or hear in an American audience. Then, too, the class of music is far better. But, O, the English language 'as it is spoke' over here. We have had a fierce struggle to understand enough to buy our railroad tickets and get our meals! But by patient perseverance and continued request to 'spell the word,' I am finally getting my ear attuned to the lingo and beginning to comprehend pretty well. The man who spoke the clearest English in the House of Commons when we were there last Saturday was a young Welshman, and the Irish members were the next best speakers.

"We tried 'kippers' at Liverpool the morning after we landed, and both promptly pronounced them bad, very unpalatable. Miss Helm has never changed her mind. I have, however, been cultivating a taste for kippers and tea, and am beginning to be able to take either without making a wry face.

"We are beginning our study of city mission work in earnest. Dr. Lambuth is here, and on Sunday we attended meeting after meeting until late in the night. We are all impressed with the fine, thorough work being done by the Salvation Army. We have visited many of the mission centers and met a number of the leading workers in the city.

"I am so glad you are making such satisfactory progress with the new house. I do not fail to pray for the committees and contractor daily, and you are all much in my thoughts. Tell Miss Campbell I am so glad she helped with the county institute. I am sure it must advance the interest of the Sue Bennett School.

"We have not been to Ireland yet, and I fear will not be able to meet your sister soon. We had it in our minds to stop at New Castle as we came down from Scotland, but finding the schools and Deaconess Houses

closed everywhere else for the summer vacation, felt sure we would not find her there. The Ecumenical begins next week, and the American delegates are already coming in. We have met several and heard of others."

The great World's Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 called Miss Bennett to Europe again. Many Southern Methodist people attended this conference, and thus she was surrounded with congenial companionship. Miss Bennett tarried in Europe for recreation and travel. Something of the character and personnel of this conference is outlined in a letter from Edinburgh, Scotland, June 20, to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Waller Bennett:

"We reached Edinburgh just a week ago, coming direct from Liverpool, where we landed after a lovely voyage, the ship folks said the smoothest in ten years. We saw numberless icebergs and one whale. Forty or fifty Southern people that I knew in one way or another made up the party from Texas that we joined at Cincinnati, and we were joined at Toronto and Montreal by a number of pleasant Canadians. The World's Missionary Conference is great, too great for us to get a good perspective while we are a part of it. Lords, sirs, archbishops, and bishops have become so common we no longer crane our necks or prick up our ears to see or hear them. In Assembly Hall, where about fifteen hundred delegates meet for three daily sessions, no man or woman except the chairmen of the committees who prepared the reports is allowed more than seven minutes 'to say his or her say,' no matter how important. They are here from all parts of the earth, and the personnel of the body is most interesting. The seven-minute speeches give us a good opportunity to see or hear all the celebrities and to get a first-hand view of work and workers from every country, Christian and non-Christian. Only a few women have spoken so far, and they have been English missionaries from India, China, and Japan. There are two women on the business committee, which is the controlling committee of the conference—one English and one American.

"The Edinburgh people have opened their homes and

are most cordial in their hospitality, but most of us have preferred to pay hotel bills and be at liberty to do as we please. The conference opened with a great reception given by the Lord Provost and his cabinet. They were gorgeous in real satin gowns, knee breeches, and bewigged heads. The most interesting occasion to me, however, was the conferring of degrees by the University of Edinburgh on fourteen members of the conference, four of whom were Americans. It was a very imposing and impressive ceremony. Lucy and I have not seen much of each other since we landed, as she is at the hotel with the Mimms party, while Mrs. Harrison, Miss Davies, and I, declining to take private entertainment, had to secure rooms at another hotel. I have about decided to go on to Oberammergau and Southern Europe with the party after the Conference closes, while Lucy will remain in Scotland and England for a month, going to Oberammergau in August. Our reservations were taken for these different dates, and Lucy says she expects to spend next winter and spring in Italy and will not go South now. We will meet again on the continent and now expect to go to Palestine with Miss Redford's party, which sails from Naples September 15. Mrs. Harrison is a delightful traveling companion, and we enjoy her very much."

To Mrs. Waller Bennett she sent this letter from Geneva, dated July 22, 1910, in which she tells of many changes noted in Rome since her visit in 1890 and gives a graphic account of a reception at the Vatican, where she saw his holiness Pope Pius IX:

"Notwithstanding the heat of the midday, we had a delightful week in Rome. The wonderful excavations in the Forum Romanum, and especially in the palaces of the Cæsars, since I was in Rome twenty years ago, were of the greatest interest to me. The city has grown and modernized immensely too, but I did not fail to see again the things that gave me so much pleasure when I was there before. Some of the galleries have been greatly enriched by statuary from the excavations, and modern art is beginning to attract the attention of the world, even if it is still overshadowed by the great masterpieces of the past. Some of the splendid altar

pieces have been removed from St. Peter's and replaced by Mosaic copies that are considered very fine.

"I closed my stay at Rome by a visit to the Pope and am not at all sorry that I had the opportunity to do so. Some members of the party had letters to the American Ambassador and, wanting to attend one of his holiness's receptions, presented them to the American office, but were told that the embassy had absolutely no entrance to the Vatican, no more, that is, than any other American citizens, and could do nothing for them. Some ladies of the Mimms Company, however, formed the acquaintance of a young Bostonian in the hotel who had been three years in Rome studying for the priesthood, and he succeeded through one of the cardinals in securing eight tickets. One of these was offered me, and Mrs. Mimms later gave hers to Mrs. Harrison. The reception was announced for 11 A.M., and all ladies must wear either black or white dresses and veils of corresponding color over their heads. I wore a lace scarf belonging to my friend, Mrs. Grubbs. Our little company of eight met the young priest at the foot of the Royal Stairway, on the right side of the Vatican. We passed through one or more large halls, out onto the Loggia, and thence into a still more spacious hall. This was seated all around the walls with sofas and comfortable chairs. The Swiss guards, red dressed 'men in waiting,' and black robed priests were in evidence everywhere. We were seated in this large reception room, with many others, and had a very pleasant social hour until about one hundred and fifty people had joined us. At 11:45 the Swiss guards to the number of eight or ten, lined up in one end of the room, and with much form and ceremony made a rather lengthy announcement which we of course did not understand, as it was delivered in the Italian tongue. While we were still wondering what it meant, one of the red-robed gentlemen lifted a curtain at the corner of the room, and we all were marshaled into another still more elegant reception room and seated around the walls in the same manner as in the first one. This last hall had at one end a platform and on it a most magnificent golden chair or throne with crimson canopy and much other ornamentation. The walls of the room were hung with crimson brocatel and had a few splendid large pictures on it. All of the Roman Catholic commun-

cants, and many of the Protestants, had rosaries, crosses, prayer books, and numberless other devotional objects in their hands to be blessed by the Holy Father. We waited again ten or fifteen minutes, and then, very quietly, from a side door, at the throne end of the hall, two of the Swiss guards entered, followed by a Cardinal preceding the Pope. In the order in which they entered the little company made the circuit of the room, the Pope extending his hand to each individual, all kneeling (or leaning forward), gave the hand a slight pressure, and the individual kissed the large seal ring, or bowed over it as he desired. There were a few little children with their parents and one little chap about four years old piped out something in a shrill childish voice as the Pope approached him, which brought a broad smile to the old gentleman's face and he patted the little fellow lovingly on the cheek. After making the circuit of the room he stood for a moment, then raised his hands and formally blessed all in the room, all their families and loved ones, all their possessions, and all objects of devotions that they might have with them, then turned and left the room, and the audience was over. He is a large, strong-looking man with a very benign expression on his face and a soft kindly Italian voice. He was dressed in a white cloth gown and cape, with a small close-fitting skull cap of the same on the back of his head. The only color about him was his crimson kid slippers. He looked about sixty-five or seventy years old.

"As we left the Vatican we met a Mrs. —— from Paris, Ky., who told us she and two other friends, after some little altercation with the guards at the door, had entered without tickets or permission from any one. I have seen Protestants and American people do the most offensive things in the Catholic churches since I have been over and at times it has been difficult to hold my peace."

Miss Bennett joined Miss Redford's party for Palestine in September, 1910, and it is cause for regret that no letter containing comment upon the country where her Lord lived, toiled, and suffered is available for this brief record of her travels. This quotation is made from a letter writ-

ten in Cairo to her niece, Mrs. Lizzie Bennett McCord, of Seattle, dated November 4:

"After an eighteen hours' train ride through the heat and glare of the Egyptian desert, we landed at Cairo again this morning in time for breakfast. We had just five days for the great temples and ruins of upper Egypt. They are wonderfully interesting, and we ought to have had two weeks. Lucia and I have really groaned in spirit that we could not have another day at Luxor and Karnach. The uncertainty about steamers, sailing dates, and the cholera situation generally have made our movements somewhat unsatisfactory. On our arrival this morning we were rejoiced with the good news that quarantine had been withdrawn from Naples, and the port is now open.

"The trains to upper Egypt have double tops with no ventilators; double windows, one of blue glass and a close slat shutter on the outside. The dust and the sand raised by the motion of the train are almost stiffling, and the glare of the sun is something fierce. We were expected to stay in the coach with windows and doors closed, enduring the situation as best we could. This was possible at night in the sleepers, for the nights are really cool after ten o'clock. But during the day rides to and from Luxor to Assuan I sat on the steps of the platform, preferring to swallow the dust and sand rather than suffer from the close atmosphere of the coach. The country is full of American tourists. The only things more in evidence are the goats and donkeys. The English, too, are beginning to get back from their summer outings, and we find the hotels in Cairo looking very gay since our return.

"The Bible tells us that a mixed multitude went up behind the Israelites when they went out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. I don't know how many went out, but I know the land is populated with a mixed multitude now. The street in front of the hotel at the present moment has a motley throng on it that looks as if they might have come from every known or unknown quarter of the globe.

"I have grown so interested in English and Egyptian politics that I hardly see how I can get on without an English paper when I get home. The educational question is to the front here, and I find myself reading the





WALLER BENNETT

WHOSE MORAL SUPPORT ENCOURAGED MISS BENNETT'S EVERY ENDEAVOR

discussions with as much eagerness as if it were a matter of Kentucky politics. The American Presbyterian and Church of England Mission Boards have each fine schools in the large towns of Egypt, and in the last years the Mohammedans have opened a few schools for girls, but the degradation of the people generally is something dreadful considering how long England has had a controlling force in the government of the country.

"After dinner. The last dinner gong sounded before I could close. We have just finished. I wish you could see the number of handsomely dressed women in the halls and reception rooms, smoking cigarettes and drinking Turkish coffee. I have seen nothing like it elsewhere. It is perfectly disgusting!"

The Woman's Missionary Council in annual session requested Miss Bennett to visit the various foreign mission fields, that the women of the Church might catch the viewpoint of an executive of the various institutions projected and maintained at their expense. To this end she sailed with Miss M. L. Gibson for Brazil in July, 1913. Letters to her family concerning the social life of the people and beauty of this great country present the most attractive pictures. To Mr. and Mrs. Bennett at Richmond she wrote from Petropolis, Brazil, August 10, 1913:

"We landed at Rio de Janeiro in the early morning of July 30. We had been told that the bay was the most beautiful in the world so all of the newcomers on shipboard were up at five o'clock, that we might not miss anything of the wonderful things that were to be seen. The bay, the clear-cut mountain peaks, the splendid city nestling around their base, and the superb boulevard, with its rows of stately palms, circling an almost oval sheet of deep blue water, certainly surpassed anything like it I have ever seen before. As the vessel dropped anchor half a mile out in the bay, to wait the coming of the medical inspectors and customs officer, we caught the outlines of a steam launch coming out to meet us. We waited expectantly, hanging over the ship's rail with handkerchiefs in hand and in

a few moments were answering the salutations of the missionaries and Christian Association Secretaries coming out to meet us. Nearly all our friends and workers in or near the city had come to welcome us, and we certainly did appreciate their loving thoughtfulness and the rapidity with which they put us through the customs and got us into automobiles.

"We remained only two days in Rio; then in company with Bishop Lambuth, Dr. Cook, and Miss Glenn (one of our missionary field secretaries) took the train in the wee small hours of the morning for the city of Bello Horizonte, the capital of the State of Minas-Geraes. It was a fourteen hours' journey up, up, up into the mountains. The scenes were glorious, though there were no giant peaks, nor snow caps, such as we have in our Rockies. We passed through a great many towns and villages, and many of the mountain sides were covered with coffee plants. More of these, however, were thickly dotted with great ant hills, as large as shocks of ripe corn, and about the same color. We were told that these ants burrowed their underground tunnels, many, many miles to reach gardens, orange groves, and towns, eating up every green thing when they reached these places. The hills are very thick and strongly built, and the poor people often use them as ovens for baking bread.

"After three very pleasant days at our school at Bello Horizonte we returned to this place, where the Bishop is holding the Annual Conference. We have about twenty-two American men on the field and twenty-seven women, five thousand converts and about twenty-five native preachers. Brazil is the only country in South America where Portuguese is the language of the people. Most of our missionaries can learn to use it very well in two years if they are given time to study, but the pressure for workers is so great that many of them break down in health or lose heart before they acquire it. We have spread out over the territory beyond our ability to supply the missions with workers, and I feel like 'Brer Rabbit' in the brier patch with the fire all around him as we try to make the appointments. . . .

"The town of Petropolis, where we now are, is just out from Rio de Janeiro, but twenty-five hundred feet above it is a mountain valley with great peaks loom-

ing up all around it. When the yellow fever was a yearly scourge in Rio the old Emperor Dom Pedro selected this place as his summer capital. Our school building is one of the splendid old homes and is located on a mountain peak almost as large as the one on which Kenilworth Inn stood at Asheville, N. C. The Emperor's Palace and the homes of the Princesses Isabella and Leopoldina are not far from us. The English Ambassador's home, a palace with magnificent grounds, is just around the corner from us. Two small rivers with concreted and walled banks run through the town as the Iser runs through Munich. Quaint little bridges span these streams at short intervals, and the banks are long lines of exquisite flower beds. This is the winter season of course, but it is like our early May weather, and many of the flowers and trees are heavy with bloom. They have no frost to give the country our autumn foliage coloring, but nature avenges herself by covering mountains and valleys with most wonderful shades of red shrubs and red and purple trees I have ever seen. We have nothing like them in the United States that I have seen."

To Miss Helen Bennett, Richmond, Ky., on October 7  
she wrote describing Rio de Janeiro:

"We returned to Rio ten days ago after a long trip to the Southern part of the Republic, and since then in hunting a house and location for a large girls' school have seen much of this wonderful South American city. It is truly very beautiful and quite unlike any other I have ever seen, because of the immediate proximity of the mountain peaks around which the streets run and the city is built. The architecture is strictly Spanish, all or nearly all of the houses plastered on the outside, and few of them even in the business portions of the city more than two stories high. Flat tiled roofs prevail, and the houses are painted in all the colors of the rainbow. It is a city too of beautiful parks, and two or three streets, right in the heart of the town, have rows of stately palm trees more than a hundred feet high on either side of the street. The beautiful straight bodies are quite a hundred feet high, fronds just at the top, a constant reminder of Mark Twain's description of them: 'feather dusters set up on end.'

"The American colony here is quite small, and everybody knows everybody else and the English colony as well. Many of the missionaries are old settlers and quite important factors in the colony life. I find that the Americans like the life here very much, if they have learned the Portuguese language. Many of them get only a colloquial knowledge of it.

"I greatly enjoyed my visit to one of our boarding schools out in the center of the great coffee-growing region of the republic. It was twenty-four hours by rail from Rio, but one of our churchmen, a railroad man, sent his special car half a day's ride from the city, Ribeirao Preto, for us, and we made the journey very comfortably. He is the only prominent man I have met in our Church out of Rio. In this city we have some few fine American men. While at Ribeirao Preto we were taken out to the coffee farm of a Brazilianized German who came over as an emigrant at sixteen years of age and is now known as the Coffee King of the world. The soil all up in that part of Brazil is dark red in color and evidently very rich. They say it will produce all kinds of grain in abundance; but coffee is so much more valuable, they raise little else but coffee. This coffee king has nine million trees and keeps a colony of ten thousand Italians to cultivate and gather the crop."

Miss Bennett sets fourth the customs of marketing and some of the Church festivities in Rio in this graphic letter to another niece:

*"My Dear Marie:* I wish you could have been with me at the big Central Market a few mornings ago, when I saw hundreds of street market venders filling their baskets, swinging them across their shoulders, and trotting out into the city streets. More than two thousand go out every day. They have all kinds of vegetables and fruits; sometimes one basket will be full of fish or shrimp and oysters, and sometimes one will have chickens, or a turkey in one. Every man has certain streets on which he sells, and it is very interesting to watch them walking up and down the street calling out their wares.

"You would have been interested too in some of the

Roman Catholic services I have attended. During the month of October St. Michael is given fiestas in the churches all over the city, and I have seen a number of these. His image, made of wood, is dressed up as a beautiful young knight of the Middle Ages. The image of the Virgin Mary (she is always called Our Lady, out here) is taken off the high altar in the choir of the church, and St. Michael, with drawn sword, is put up in her place. He is believed to be the defender of God; the defender of man; the defender of the Church; and the defender of all of these, against Martin Luther.

"The great altars are lighted with hundreds of candles and banked with beautiful flowers underneath the saint, and men and women in green and white uniforms do him honor in various ways. There are no big pipe organs in the churches here like we have at home, but on St. Michael's Sunday they generally have a strong band and lovely music. All of the churches have private boxes high up in the side walls, and during the worship on this Sunday great clouds of rose leaves are thrown out of the boxes nearest the high altar, and dozens of little birds are turned loose at the same time. The birds seem quite gentle, but they are so blinded by the blaze of light many of them fall to the floor and are easily caught. The streets in front of the churches and the floors inside are always thickly strewn with green leaves when they are having a fiesta'; so if the newspapers did not announce it, you could always see as you walk or ride along the streets when one was being celebrated.

The national celebrations of Latin America are great occasions and in some countries they are numerous, because they have had to overthrow foreign domination as well as monarchical forms of government inherited from their first conquerors. Miss Bennett sent to Miss Lucia Burnam, Richmond, Ky., this interesting account of government celebrations in Rio de Janeiro:

"This is Brazil's independence day. Just twenty-four years ago the bloodless revolution took place, and the old Dom Pedro II and his family were ordered to leave the country in twenty-four hours. By way of assisting them to comply with the order the Secretary of

War, with a small escort of soldiers, put them on a vessel the next morning at four o'clock, and deported them to Portugal. We were aroused early this morning by the sounds of cannonading, which was taking place on both sides of the bay. These people dearly love a demonstration, and they know how to make one. The city is beautifully lighted at all times on the principal streets. In addition to this, the parks, public squares, flower beds, prominent walls, and other conspicuous places are strung with electric lights, and with a few extra touches and an order to the gunboats and other sea craft on the bay the city can be brilliantly illuminated on short notice.

"I know you will be amused when I tell you that the automobile driving here has gotten decidedly on my nerves. The bay front esplanade and driveway is the finest I have ever seen, and there are more and handsomer machines than I have ever seen massed together in any city before. The climate is hot and enervating for seven or eight months in the year, and the wealthy people live in the autos from the time the breeze springs up in the afternoon until almost midnight. The city government has not been able, or perhaps willing, to enforce a speed limit, and as a consequence two or three times a week the most terrible tragedies take place. Pedestrians on the sidewalks are never safe; and while the greatest number of accidents take place to those in the machines, little children and old people are always in danger. I said to a gentleman who lives here: 'I have never seen such reckless driving. I think these machines must reach seventy-five and a hundred miles an hour.' 'Certainly they do,' he answered. The one saving feature is two drivers to every car. The city compels a chauffeur and an assistant. I said to another person: 'I often want to get behind one of these big iron posts when I see a car driving at such mad speed.' He pointed to a large one standing in a small equestrian drive near by and said: 'A machine with four persons in it rushed into that one, or another that stood there, last week, broke it into three pieces and crushed the auto and occupants to pieces.' The ambulances and police autos that respond to the call of the local police where these accidents take place are quite as death dealing as the private cars and public taxis.

"Mr. Roosevelt's visit was a notable event, and the

little colony of American people (North American) greatly enjoyed it. Mr. Morgan, our Ambassador, gave him a beautiful reception at the handsomest club building in the city, which was attended by five or six hundred American, Canadian, and English people. Mr. Morgan has been very much interested in helping us in a quiet way to secure property for the school, and Mr. Roosevelt promptly evinced the liveliest interest in the same. He made only two public addresses while in the city, one before a thousand men at the Y. M. C. A. and the other before the National Geographic Society, which brought him here. I was present at the first, and he made a good straight-forward plain talk on 'character in the individual' as a foundation for national greatness, and the necessity for a daily practice of 'everyday homely virtues' in the building of character. I was later interested and pleased to see the news comments on his speeches and his visit in general. One of the first which we all enjoyed was: 'Col. Roosevelt is a better Protestant preacher than he is a political speaker. Of Mr. Bryan the same can be said, and Mr. Root was on the same order.' He was entertained in the Palace of the Princess Isabella, oldest daughter of Dom Pedro II, by the government, and every waking hour must have been full of sight-seeing and attending the entertainments given him by public men. A comment bearing on this was: 'Nothing drags or lags where Mr. Roosevelt is; the servants in the palace say they just unconsciously move faster whenever he is anywhere around.' Again: 'Mr. Roosevelt is a good exemplification of the tireless energy of the people of the United States of North America; they do not stop.' The Colonel now is over in Chile, or some of the western countries."

In 1916 and 1917 Miss Bennett and the Secretary of Foreign Work visited the institutions of the Woman's Missionary Society in the Orient. To her friend, Miss Lucile Crooke, she wrote on February 1, 1917:

"We have had a most interesting and instructive trip and also a very strenuous one, for we have visited every one of our mission stations in Japan, Korea, and China. We have attended the annual meetings of each of these missions and have given ample time for each of the

several hundred missionaries to have a personal interview and tell us of their problems. We have attended committee meetings for our own Church work and also for the various interdenominational movements. In all these months we have had not more than ten days of sight-seeing. Of course, as we have investigated conditions in the different places, we have seen many of the most interesting things, and we have had the company of the missionaries who could give us the best information. Travel in the East is far from the easy thing that it is in America."

To her sister, Mrs. Waller Bennett, she wrote concerning mutual friends in Korea, closing with this interesting account of a bit of social life which she permitted herself to enjoy:

"While we were in Korea, Baron Yun Chi Ho (the conspiracy prisoner) gave Miss Head and myself a banquet, to which all the missionaries and some other foreigners were invited. At the banquet I was seated by the Prince's mother, who was at the end of the center table, and his wife sat just on the other side of me. As they neither one spoke English and I spoke no Korean, we observed the Korean custom of keeping quiet at meals, except when a missionary interpreted for me, the said missionary being across the table, one seat down. We had another afternoon tea given us, which was attended by the members of the Legations, and all the other three hundred foreigners in the city it seemed to me. As we were in the Conference all day and committees until midnight, the social functions were more than we could find time for, so we had to decline a number of others."

Among the personal letters Miss Bennett wrote during the months she was in the Orient is this one to Miss Lucia Burnam, dated Soochow, China, October 30, 1916:

"Through the kindness of a missionary friend I am sending you a letter from a house boat on the Grand Canal.

"I wish I could tell you something of this country as we see it from day to day. This trip up, or rather

down, the Grand Canal has been full of interest. The country itself doesn't look unlike our own Kentucky blue-grass region if seen from a distance. Certain features, however, are so markedly apparent when close by you cannot fail to have them loom up before you. You have doubtless often heard it said that China is one vast cemetery. This is so to a much larger extent than you can possibly believe unless you see it. The bodies are buried in great round mounds, some of them twenty and thirty feet in diameter and ten or fifteen feet high. These are usually family mounds. Those where a single body has been buried are from twelve to fifteen feet in diameter and about six feet high. As you approach the cities these mounds seem almost to touch each other along the hillsides and even in the valleys, and through the great rice fields they are very close together. We have been told a number of times that quite one-eighth of the country is taken up by these burial mounds. Many families of wealth have been utterly broken up financially by the continued changes of burial places. If there is sickness or bad luck of any kind in the family, the sorceress is sought and asked, of course, what causes it, and for a small or large fee they are told that the body of some ancestor is disturbed in its burial place and must be changed. In some instances the changes take place so often and are so expensive that the family is impoverished. Yesterday before leaving Huchow, as we were out visiting our day schools, we were taken through the large, rambling home of a once wealthy and still quite prominent family. In the big reception room, which is a stone-floored court, we saw an immense coffin of the mother of this family; it was a Christian family, however, and this woman herself had been a very devout Christian. It is the custom of many of these people to keep the body of the mother or father in an open niche in the house for months or even years, but these are generally the heathen people. In this instance we were told by one of the missionaries that this body had been kept in the house because the woman's jewels were put in the coffin, and they feared if she was buried in the ground (or rather on top of it, as the coffins are placed and then covered over with these mounds) it might be broken into and the jewels stolen."

To Miss Burnam she wrote this description of that most interesting of all life affairs, a wedding:

"We also had an opportunity of attending a Christian Chinese wedding yesterday evening just before the dinner hour. Both parties were old students of our mission schools, and they were, therefore, married in the church. The Chinese people are the noisiest I have ever seen—the Negroes not excepted. In this instance the bride was brought over in a Chinese chair, preceded by a Chinese band which is largely made up of wind instruments, and such a noise as they made coming into the churchyard and filing into the gallery as all the congregation stood up to see them you have rarely heard! The young woman was handsomely dressed in a pink embroidered Chinese gown, which was a rented one, according to custom. She was the first who had worn this beautiful garment, but would doubtless be succeeded by a great many other brides. She also, following American custom, had on a long, pink, net veil gathered in a sort of crown at the top of her head and falling to the bottom of her skirts. White is mourning in China, and she, of course, could not wear a white veil. The ladies tell us that most of them are married in mosquito net veils, as they cannot get finer material for veiling in the interior towns. The bride was accompanied by two young girls as maids of honor who held her up by each arm, and they were followed by two others. The girls here under seventeen all wear close-fitting pants with short jackets; after seventeen they put on skirts, while the men and boys wear the skirts from childhood! It is very difficult to tell the girls from boys except by the hair. The men and boys are now having their hair cut, while the girls still wear the long braids. The groom, with two or three young men accompanying him, came in at the other door of the church, and all met at the altar, the bride and groom standing some distance apart. When the time came for them to join hands, according to the Methodist ceremony, the preachers had some trouble in getting them to extend their hands, as the two young people had never touched each other before, and though they were of prominent families and both members of the Christian Church, they had almost no acquaintance with each other. After the ceremony they were seated in two large chairs

just in front of the altar rail while one of the missionaries sang a solo. A chorus of small boys had filed up in front of them before the ceremony and given a selection also. We were told that in many instances quite a number of speeches are made as the bridal party sit in these chairs and listen. The one solo after the ceremony, however, was all on this occasion, and when this was over the bride with her attendants turned and walked, followed by the groom and his attendants. A large feast had been given at midday by the bride's family, and after the ceremony she was taken to the groom's house and another feast was given there. The houses are always wide open, and any and everybody can go in, walk all over the house, look at the bride and examine her clothes as she sits with downcast face and eyes. Invitations are issued by the family to the feast, but all who attend these are expected to take a certain amount of money with them, which is a kind of fee for their supper. The servants of the guests also sit down to the feast if there are vacant places when the invited have been seated. All guests take servants with them. Three large houses in the city of Huchow were devoted to these feasts during the day. The women were entertained in one and the men in the two others. Of course the men and women never sit together. The bride is seated in her bedroom beside her much-decorated bed, and after the feasts are over the friends of the groom and often many other men go in and tease her. She must show no evidence of feeling or even recognition; and if she does so, it is taken as a sign of impurity. We did not attend these feasts, as we have had one of twenty-four courses given us and have also had a dinner of many courses. We took something of each one of the twenty-four courses the first time, but we do not propose to repeat this!"

To other friends she wrote concerning the kitchen gods of China:

"Every Chinese home has its kitchen god, who in a way presides over the family affairs. There is usually a small altar somewhere about the stove upon which they place his food. A Chinese stove is a concrete box with a flue and two or more holes for the cooking pots. It is fed with straw, which takes the time of one person

while the cooking is going on. At the New Year season the kitchen god goes up to the other world to report on the family record. He is sent up in smoke. He is represented by a red piece of paper, oblong in shape, on which is the picture of the god in blue, black, yellow, etc. This is folded up and put in a chair like the chairs on which the people ride in China. This is brought out to the front of the house on a tray with some food, bowls of wine, a bouquet of pine, bamboo and a flower. They pile up some rolls of paper that contain cloth for his wearing apparel, both silk and cotton, then add some paper money for his use, put the chair and the bouquet on the pile, and set it on fire in the narrow street. As it burns they pour on wine. In the bottom of the chair is a piece of wood that will burn longer than the rest. This is taken out by the man or woman of the house and taken back to the kitchen to start the new year fire. They often put some sweet on the lips of the god, so that he will tell only the good about them. He stays for four or five days and then comes back to the kitchen. They may revel as much as they please while he is away and there is no one to tell on them.

"The money is covered with either silver or gold paper and is called ghost money. It is used also in funerals. The streets are very narrow, dark, and dirty, but the fourth and fifth nights before the new year they are well lighted by this burning.

"The New Year in China is the time when all must pay their debts. Men go around for days collecting, and often stay at the homes of their debtors all night worrying the family. They are very abusive and have been known to whip the wife and children. They cannot collect after the dawn of New Year unless the man is willing to pay, so they must use all the pressure possible before that time. It is a good time to buy, for if the merchant needs money for his debts he will sell cheap. Usually Chinese merchants are not eager to sell, or do not seem to be. One goes to the store where everything is on shelves and not out for display. If you call for some kind of goods he will ask all about just what kind you want and bring out just one piece. If that is not what you want, you try again to give a careful description and he gets one more piece. This process goes on for hours perhaps before you get what you want, provided you have the patience to wait

for it to come. In only the few port cities have they learned a better way and to know that foreigners want to see their goods. When our Embroidery Mission at one time wanted to buy a large quantity of a certain kind of linen, the merchant calmly told them that he did not care to sell so much, for it would take all he had.

"The temples of China show many signs of disuse and decay. Some of them are used for great occasions just once a year and then are closed up. We saw only a few that were still handsome and well kept. One of them was the 500 God Temple of Soochow. It has 500 gods all large and covered with gold leaf or a handsome bronze. They represent all kinds of gods, and so people go there for all forms of worship. There are the heroes who have been elevated to gods, who served in various forms of life, the large image of Buddha and his retainers, a Goddess of Mercy with a thousand hands, etc. The day we were there they were doing some repairing, and we saw the crude wood figure made of rough sticks over which they put the mud and then the gilding. While the worshipers could see this going on they did not seem to be affected by it. The hollowness of it all did not seem to come to them. There are a large number of priests connected with this temple and quite a group of boys in training for priests."

It is fitting that Miss Bennett's account of her journeys in the Orient should end with some story of the effort of the Church of God to bring the Christ, "the better hope," to these peoples whose hoary faiths have kept them in bondage to error and superstition. The letter was sent to Prof. J. C. Lewis, long-time Principal of Sue Bennett Memorial School:

"We are now on a return journey from a trip of more than six hundred miles up the great old Yangtze-Kiang River. The experience has been most restful and delightful after the six strenuous weeks of work in our China Missions. This is a wonderful country. God has surely done his part in the creation of all material things that make for comfort and blessing to humanity. As far as the eye can reach over the plains and valleys on either

side of this great river, the earth is a great kitchen garden. The river, quite a mile wide in many places, is alive with all kinds of water craft, from the big ocean liners to the little fishing smacks and the wretched straw mat covered house boats in which whole families live and move and have their being. The scene is of ceaseless interest. I wish you could see it. We came up the river to visit the missions in Nankin, Kinkiang, and Hankow. The first is the old capital of China and is the seat of most of our Union Mission Schools. Five of our North American Churches have united on a Union University for men and a Union Theological Seminary, the Woman's Boards on a Union College for women and a Union Woman's Bible Teacher School. Kinkiang has a splendid Northern Methodist Mission, a Boys' High School, a Girls' High School, a Woman's Bible Teacher School, and a large Woman's Hospital, of which Dr. Mary Stone, the most widely known Chinese woman physician in China, is in charge. All of these are fine. Other Boards are at work in this city, but we did not have the time to see more. Hankow and the two adjoining cities have a population of nearly or quite 2,000,000. The American Episcopal Church, the English Church, and others have been at work there for more than forty years. As I looked at the splendid bodies of young students, men and women, nearly all of them earnest Christians before they leave the schools, I have felt in my heart that China was being reached by the Spirit of God and must soon come to Christ, though the pressure of heathenism all over the land is so great it almost stifles one. Pray for China!"

## CHAPTER XII

### THAT THEY MAY ALL BE ONE

MISS BENNETT's broad, catholic spirit made her courteous always to persons of varying creeds and cults. It enabled her to reverence their search for truth and brought her into a sympathetic kinship with men and women who were searching for God, no matter how. Doctrinal differences were forgotten in their common faith in one God and an overmastering devotion to Jesus Christ. With the Jew and the Roman Catholic she could join in worship and world service, for, like herself, they believe in the one God.

Miss Bennett was unreservedly loyal to her own branch of the Church universal. But in her outlook upon the non-Christian world she saw the strength of the gospel message weakened by divided evangelistic forces. She was convinced that emphasis upon theological dogma or doctrinal differences of the Christian Churches at work in the mission fields was unwise, nay, harmful, as blocking the way or foisting upon new believers interpretations of Scripture and modes of worship that had often grown out of historical or economic pressure in the Western world. Unity of objective and of spirit in presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ to the multiplied peoples of the earth she knew to be the will of the Father, and no less certainly did she realize that the magnitude of the task was beyond the power of any one denomination. It was the greatness of the enterprise that gave her a passion for interdenominational co-operation.

She early became a representative of her Church at interdenominational conferences, where her great spirit soon won leadership. The spirit of comity and coöperation in

Church work through the Salvation Army, the Young Woman's Christian Association, the Council of Women for Home Missions, the Federation of Foreign Mission Boards, and the larger Church movement, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, she counted as an earnest of the unity of spirit and bond of fellowship which must prevail throughout the militant Church ere the kingdom comes. Miss Bennett was particularly interested in the Foreign Mission Conference of North America, as the greatest interdenominational force in this country. She served on its Committee of Reference and Council, to which she contributed valuable service in its effort to enter into co-operative work.

Miss Bennett was greatly interested in the discussions concerning preparation of missionaries at the great World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910. The Board of Missionary Preparation eventuated from this Conference. Among other duties set before this Board was the instruction "to confer with the Societies and Boards as to the best method of working toward the formation of an International Missionary Committee." It was inevitable that Miss Bennett should be selected for membership in this International Missionary Committee at its first meeting. The notice of her election reads:

"347 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK CITY, Feb. 26, 1921.  
Miss Belle H. Bennett, LL.D.,  
Methodist Episcopal Church, South,  
Richmond, Ky.

"Dear Miss Bennett: As you know, you were elected at Garden City in January to serve as a member of the International Missionary Committee. This committee will hold its first meeting October 1-7, 1921, in the United States. The place for the meeting will be chosen and announced within two or three months. I write you to-day to request you kindly to set apart and protect the entire period, October 1, to 7, inclusive. From present indications, we shall have at the meet-

ing members from Great Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, South Africa, Australia, India, China, Japan, and the Near East. We are most desirous of having present to welcome them and to take counsel with them *every* American and Canadian member. With God's assured presence and guidance, the forthcoming meeting should exert a marked influence in the direction of furthering international understanding, planning, and action. Realizing how highly important this is, let us seek to make conscientious preparation in prayer.

"Please acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Sincerely yours,

JOHN R. MOTT."

This great meeting was held at Lake Mohonk, N. Y., October 1-7, 1921, and was one of the great episodes of her life, as she saw there the oneness of spirit in the united purpose of the evangelical Churches of the world which must accomplish the Master's will. She seldom wrote for publication, nor did she often enlarge upon her own experiences; hence this letter to Miss Howell gives her best expression concerning this great occasion:

"I reached home late last night, having been gone three weeks to-morrow. The International meeting was truly a wonderful meeting. I think I have attended only one other that was so impressive, and that was the great meeting in Edinburgh in 1910.

"Twelve foreign lands, including England, were represented by thirty-five delegates or coöpted members. I think there were about ten of the latter. There were fifty-four in all, including Secretaries, and many of the men had brought their wives and daughters, so that altogether there were something like seventy-five or eighty in the company. I cannot begin to tell you of it in writing; but when I see you, will, I hope, be able to give you just a glimpse of the body and tell you something of the great things, peoples, and subjects that were discussed.

"The hottest discussion, and perhaps the longest at the meeting, was on Dr. Brown's article—I mean, based

on that question—the Church in the Mission Field, in the October number of the *International Review of Missions*. There was a very general consensus of belief that the native Christian leaders and Church members must be given more leadership, be called more into the councils of the Churches, and must have greater authority in every way than they have ever had in the past, or the Church will continue to be a foreign Church. The paper drawn up by the special committee appointed to consider this question brought out all of these things in detail; and while we could not all see how everything in a mission could be turned over to native leadership, we saw the justice and wisdom of it, even in much of Africa.

"From the first hour of the meeting at Mohonk, all members of the committee were urged to give nothing out to reporters or for publication in any way. The meetings were all held behind closed doors, except two at evening, at which missionaries and foreign members of the committee spoke to the guests of the hotel."

As leader of a great missionary organization, sitting on committees of appropriation and appointment of missionaries, where always the supply of either women or money was inadequate to measure to the plea from the fields for reinforcement, Miss Bennett's conviction of the need of conservation through interdenominational union in missionary service had been deepened. This attitude was greatly strengthened when she made a scientific study of Protestant work in Latin America in 1915. The great Congress on Christian Work in Latin America was held in Panama, February, 1916, for discussion of problems and methods of work of the Protestant Church in the eighteen countries embraced in the name Latin America. The preparation for the Congress was made through eight commissions, with given subjects for investigation, whose reports furnished data for discussion. Miss Bennett was selected as Chairman of the Commission on Woman's Work, composed of seventeen experienced workers, representatives of different nations and types of work. This was no little honor, but it

was difficult and a laborious task. Mrs. Ida W. Harrison, LL.D., of Lexington, Ky., was Secretary of the Commission, and together they planned and executed a most interesting and stimulating report.

Through a most exhaustive questionnaire sent to a hundred responsible persons, an invaluable mass of material was collected which furnished the basis of intelligent discussion. The report covered historical statements concerning the beginnings of organized Protestant work for women in the various countries of Latin America, with very brief sketches of some leading pioneer missionary women in different parts of the Americas. Pen pictures of the share native women had in the struggles for freedom were drawn. The collective traits of the women of the leisure class, the self-supporting, the humbler class, and the Indians were outlined. The questions of educational advances, including reports of national and private primary, secondary, high, and normal schools with varying courses were discussed. The social consciousness of Latin American women was portrayed, revealing their interest in clubs and societies, their support of betterment organization and coöperation in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Young Woman's Christian Association. The report showed the need for a more efficient educational program for Protestant schools; it showed the power of social-evangelistic work to serve the children, young people, and the home in their spiritual need; it pointed to the enlargement of service by a larger use of native workers; it revealed the need of a larger use of Christian literature and coöperating agencies. The findings of the Commission called for the appointment in far greater numbers of gifted, cultured, specially prepared women; it urged provision for varied types of educational service, interboard coöperation, freer use of Christian literature, greater use of native workers, and pro-

motion of social-evangelistic work. The closing paragraph reads:

"The great note of unity should run through all our work—social, educational, and evangelistic—for this day of conservation. The urgency of the task should permit of no waste. The Latin people are already familiar with the outward and visible unity of the Roman communion. . . .

"The great task of bringing evangelical Christianity to Latin America cannot be accomplished with divided ranks. It demands the combined forces of Christianity to develop a statesmanlike policy for the accomplishment of the task.

"As we push forward to make Jesus Christ King and Saviour of our Western Hemisphere, we should remember it can be done only in answer to his prayer: 'That they may all be one, . . . that the world may believe thou didst send me.'"

It is not difficult to trace Miss Bennett's compelling influence in this report of the Commission on Woman's Work. That the Committee on Coöperation in Latin America has applied these findings to woman's work on the fields reveals that they are practical as well as suggestive.

Miss Bennett's position concerning denominational union in mission fields was reënforced by a visit to the Orient in 1916-17. She was also persuaded that there was great need of social-evangelistic centers in the great cities, to establish opportunity for personal touch with great masses of Orientals who had not come to the Church nor so much as heard of the gospel. She and the Secretary of the Foreign Work included this suggestion in their report to the Council:

"Our woman's work in Seoul has taken on many institutional features under the leadership of the evangelistic workers, Miss Myers and Mrs. J. P. Campbell. Here a central plant for settlement work is needed. This ought to be a union institution, since in the capital city a number of boards are at work. In the foreign

field, thank God, the various denominations are learning to know that united effort is a conservation of money, time, and life."

Concerning other union enterprises in Korea they reported:

"Two union efforts have been very successful—*viz.*, the Union Bible Institute at Seoul, in which we unite with the Northern Methodists and Northern Presbyterians, and the Union Bible School at Wonsan, with the Canadian Presbyterians. These schools, as do our other Bible schools, last from six weeks to three months; and the workers go back to do a good work in their own communities. With representatives from other missions, we considered the need for a Union Bible School with a nine months' term and good entrance requirements. A higher grade of Bible woman is a manifest need in all the Oriental fields. While no definite plans for such a school were inaugurated, a union committee was appointed to study the question more fully and to call another conference in 1917."

With zeal born of conviction Miss Bennett proceeded to urge the establishment of a *union evangelistic* enterprise at Seoul upon the Council, among her friends, and with other mission boards. The depth of her conviction on this question is portrayed in her letters to Mrs. L. H. Glide, to whom she always wrote when in need of counsel and help:

"You will remember the community center, with a big hall for evangelistic meetings we told you were so much needed in Seoul, Korea. We cannot get the location and put up what we need for less than twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars. We feel such a building ought to be a union plant when it is needed by all and is so expensive. We want the Northern Presbyterians and the Northern Methodists to give ten thousand each, we to do the same. You were good enough to say you thought you would be able to furnish that amount.

"It takes a long time and so much work to get a *union* mission of any kind on any field. Haven't those

oil wells bubbled up yet? If they have and you could just let me have the whole amount, God's Community House with an Evangelistic Hall for gospel services every night in the week would soon glorify him in Seoul. The Koreans make wonderful Christians and great preachers. I could write on and on to you, dear friend, of the need of these halls and evangelists in Japan, China, and Korea, yes, and Brazil too; but the needs are looming up everywhere, and there are so few to meet them."

Later she wrote:

"We will need quite \$30,000 for the plant. After we get that, I am quite sure the Council will gladly pay all current expenses. We do seem slow in establishing these works for saving souls; but when we know God is with us and is guiding us, our hearts are made brave for the struggle. I only wish we had all the money and could go forward without having to depend on other denominations. Don't think, dear friend, that I have added that clause by way of asking you to do more. You promised the \$10,000, and I know that all you have belongs to the Lord, and he gives you your judgment, as well as your heart, that you may decide where he wants you to put the money he has given you. What a strong, brave soldier you have been all of these years!"

Mrs. Glide made it possible to begin this social evangelism in Seoul by giving ten thousand dollars. Later the Presbyterian and Methodist Episcopal Churches joined in the enterprise. The records show *union* work in the Union Bible Training School at Seoul and also at Wonsan. Four evangelistic centers in different cities of Korea carrying the gospel of love and service to thousands of men, women, and children were established within four years. Native Christian workers, a Korean woman doctor, and a few missionaries are the human instruments God is using as his witnesses in plants *which are* because he gave Belle Bennett leadership one time in Korea.

When China became a republic and announced an educa-

tional program for government schools which called for a million teachers, the missionary force realized the day of Christianity's largest opportunity had arrived. There could never be a hope of supplying missionary teachers in sufficient numbers to touch the outer rim of the demand, nor could a teaching force be sufficiently augmented by sending Chinese students to Western countries. There could be but one line of action, that of building colleges and teacher-training schools in China, that larger numbers of native Christians might have the necessary preparation for leadership in new China.

At Nanking five coöperating mission boards established Gingling College, for higher education of Chinese women. Graduates of mission high schools find there the usual college courses, with opportunity for specialized work. The first money paid toward the purchase of this property was ten thousand dollars (the agreed *pro rata* of each board participating) sent by order of Miss Bennett and Mrs. J. B. Cobb, Foreign Secretary, for the Woman's Missionary Council in 1913. To Miss Bennett this movement stood for the enrichment of life and freedom from bondage of a great people through the teachers, the wives, and the mothers who would go from its halls out into the service of China's four hundred million people. It was Miss Bennett's great privilege to name her friend, Miss Ella Hannahwalt, as head of the department of Education at Ginling College.

While classical preparation of Chinese teachers was inaugurated by the new college movement, the Nanking Bible Teachers' School was organized to meet the growing need of Bible teachers in the mission schools and in the social-evangelistic work of China. Again Miss Bennett led the women of her Church into an enterprise jointly supported by five woman's missionary boards. Miss Ruth Brittain,

the Council's own daughter from Alabama, represents the Southern Methodist Church as dean of the faculty.

When the Mary Black Hospital at Soochow, China, developed a small medical college for Chinese women, which could have come to pass only under the genius of a woman like Dr. Margaret Polk, Miss Bennett was its most ardent advocate and supporter. From a human standpoint it was not possible to make a worth-while Medical School with so little equipment, but in spite of limitations the little school sent out a few excellent Chinese women doctors. But the China Medical Association, under the fostering care of the Rockefeller Foundation, raised the standards of Medical schools and the discontinuance of this small plant was inevitable. While the question was pending the faculty and students of the Mary Black Hospital and Medical School were drawn into the World War service and stationed in Siberia to care for the sick and wounded soldiers. When Miss Bennett and the Foreign Secretary visited the Orient in 1916 they were greatly moved by the knowledge they gained of the physical suffering of the Chinese women because of the seclusion and hardships of their lives. They realized there was need of a larger woman's medical school than was possible at Soochow or than any one denomination could maintain. There were but three medical schools in China to prepare Chinese women doctors, who alone can serve women—one in Peking, another in Canton, and this small one at Soochow. As Miss Bennett thought of "the women of China who are such great physical sufferers" the vision of a great medical school, owned and administered by coöperating woman's boards in Central China, was given her. Again she was "driven by the Spirit," as in the establishment of the Training School, and she returned to America, declaring: "There is no greater need on any field, home or foreign, than that of a Woman's Medical School at Shanghai." The China

Mission also saw this "great and effectual door" of service, and memorialized the Woman's Missionary Council to move the Medical School from Soochow to Shanghai, where faculty facilities are larger.

At the annual meeting of the Council in 1917 the women were so moved by Miss Bennett's appeals they determined to follow her leading and unanimously voted to move the Medical School from Soochow to Shanghai and enlarge it so as to meet the required standards. They authorized the President and Foreign Secretary to seek the coöperation of other women's boards working in East Central China and to provide for the continuance of the name "Mary Black" in connection with the new institution.

When Dr. Hattie Love, whose able, consecrated service had made the efficiency of the Soochow Medical School so outstanding, knew of this larger program, she gave the women of the Council this picture of the field into which they were entering:

"The Union Woman's Medical College of Shanghai will be a unique work in China. No other mission, nor even the Chinese government, is doing a similar work—that is, teaching medicine in English to Chinese women. Furthermore, this will be the only woman's medical college in Central China, with its eight provinces and roughly estimated population of 226,000,000—half the entire population of China. The Church in this one institution will have the unparalleled opportunity and unprecedented privilege of influencing these 226,000,000 people for Christianity. If not grasped now, we venture to say that within ten years this opportunity will have passed forever from the hands of the Church."

This brief sketch of Miss Bennett's leading and the loyal following of those who came to her in her "heritage of leadership" cannot picture the labor involved in carrying to fruition this large vision of service. There were days of timid approach to other boards of missions; there were days

when the way seemed utterly blocked by unsympathetic spirits. Only those who have inaugurated any union enterprise can understand the difficulties, the test of patience, the test of obedience, that those who lead must endure. The records show that Miss Bennett and Miss Howell made three and five visits to New York a year to persuade other boards to join in this high fellowship; there were also visits to formulate plans and to meet legal and technical difficulties. They do not show how this woman, upon whom the Lord had placed responsibility of doing great things for him and his Chinese children, waited before him for guidance, for wisdom, for victory. Mrs. H. W. Peabody, whose loyal support and skill in service helped lead the other denominational forces in this vision divine, tells how he answered Miss Bennett's faith:

"This enterprise was one very near and dear to Miss Bennett's heart. Her far vision saw the value of such a high-grade medical school located in Shanghai; and when the Soochow Medical School of the Woman's Board of the Southern Methodist Church was discontinued, it was with the hope that an interdenominational school might be established at an early date.

"The difficulties, however, were not easily surmounted. The first attempt to secure coöperation of the various Boards working in Eastern and Central China was defeated. This proved a great disappointment to Miss Bennett and those who were associated with her on the committee for the establishment of this Medical School for Women.

"Year after year passed. Each attempt to proceed seemed blocked. There was objection to a school for women. Certain men felt that there should be a medical school for men and women. Miss Bennett, while extremely broad in her views, with others felt that it would be a long time before conservative Chinese families would be willing to send their daughters to a mixed school. They felt also that there were conditions which must be changed before such association would be desirable.

"At last, after years of prayer and effort, the crisis

came. At a meeting where the various Boards had come for consultation again objections were raised by certain men who were opposed to the women's independent action. Dear Miss Bennett had been so patient and persistent and prayerful that the disappointment was very great. After the men had left the meeting, supposing they had again blocked the plan of the women, a little group realized there had been no adjournment and they could continue in prayer. A wonderful meeting followed, continuing until six o'clock. The meeting then adjourned to the next morning, the delegates deciding to remain over and again seek God's guidance through a night of prayer. With the morning light came.

"The Woman's Union Missionary Society, first in the field of women's work, was ready to coöperate. This society held a very valuable property in the Chinese city known as the Margaret Williamson Hospital. The location was an ideal one. The hospital was the largest women's hospital in China with an honorable record through many years. At the close of the prayer service suddenly one of the officers of the Woman's Union Missionary Society said: 'Would you like our hospital as a foundation for this medical college?' There was a breathless hush. Nothing could be so desirable. Nothing could have been more unexpected, since this institution was one of the greatest and dearest to the heart of the women who had founded it. Miss Bennett's face lighted with joy at the very thought, and all were impressed with the presence of the Holy Spirit, who was guiding in this work, making it possible to do the impossible.

"Again the women prayed in that upper room at 25 Madison Avenue, New York City. Above the roar of the city with its great human interests God was working out his plan. The answer came in due time from the Board of the Woman's Union Missionary Society. There were some disappointments, and Boards which we had hoped might be included were not able to come into this coöoperative group, but four Boards united: The Woman's Union Missionary Society, the Woman's Board of the Southern Methodist Church, the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, and the Woman's Society of the Reformed Church in America.

"Together they planned and continued in prayer.

Years passed, and dear Miss Bennett entered into her reward, but with her constantly in mind the little group has gone on planning until, September, 1924, the college became a reality.

"A wonderful faculty has been brought together, the college is established as an 'A-Grade' institution, the entering class numbering six pioneer, prepared women students. The buildings are rising on the land belonging to the Woman's Union Missionary Society. A Nurses' Home was given by the Woman's Board of the Baptist Church. The great central main building, named in honor of Miss Bennett, furnishes classrooms, laboratories, and clinic offices. The residence 'Stevenside' is to be enlarged. A dormitory for medical students is completed, and money is in hand for the first unit of the hospital.

"In these days of financial strain for mission boards it is little less than a miracle that these plans have worked out and this progress has been made. The gift from the Woman's Union Missionary Society is made on condition that this school remain a school for women, Christian, evangelical, and missionary. In the summer of 1924 articles of incorporation were taken out in the District of Columbia with a Board of Trustees responsible for the institution.

"Through all the days of anxiety, the blessed answer to prayer, the wonder at God's work, and the rejoicing over faculty and students, we have been conscious of dear Miss Bennett's pioneer effort, of her faithful, persistent loyalty to her vision. It is still necessary that we have faith and courage, for there are still difficulties, still many great and pressing needs if this institution is to be all that we have hoped; but believing in God, loving China and her women and children, and remembering the faith and works of Belle Bennett, we shall not fail."

The name of her whose obedience to the heavenly vision gave the Woman's Christian Medical College to China will for all time be identified with the institution in the beautiful memorial, Belle H. Bennett Clinical Building, which is regarded as the best of its kind in China outside of the Rockefeller buildings in Peking. It was dedicated in November, 1925, eight years after God spoke to her through

the suffering of Chinese women. This beautiful memorial to her work for China rises by the side of others whose co-operation in establishing this great institution made possible the fulfillment of the Christ's world-embracing prayer uttered two thousand years ago: "Sanctify them also that believe on me . . . *that they may all be one . . .* that the world may know that thou didst send me."

## CHAPTER XIII

### STRUGGLING FOR CHURCH SUFFRAGE

NINETEEN hundred and six was an epoch-making period in the history of Southern Methodist folk, for it was then the women discovered their limited relation to the Church. For twenty-eight years one group had wrought marvelously for women and children in foreign lands while another group (many of them the same women) had pioneered in organized home missions, content in fulfilling the great commission of the Christ through the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. But when the Associated Press of America sent abroad the statement that the General Conference of 1906 had been instructed to unite these two organizations, there were more than a hundred thousand surprised Methodist women in the South. Still greater was their surprise when they found that the men of the Church could legislate concerning the women's work, but that the women had neither voice nor vote in the great lawmaking body that determined what they might do and the method of doing it. The Woman's Board of Home Missions was in annual session when the announcement was made and promptly this resolution, offered by two of the most conservative members, was unanimously adopted:

*"Resolved,* That the President and General Secretary are hereby requested to attend the General Conference in Birmingham and are given full power to act for the Woman's Board of Home Missions in promoting its interests."

When Miss Bennett and Mrs. MacDonell, President and General Secretary of the Home Board, and Mrs. A. W. Wilson and Mrs. J. B. Cobb, Vice President and Associate Secretary of the Foreign Board, met in Birmingham, they

found the Episcopal Address to the General Conference had recommended:

"The union of the Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Societies of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the President, Vice President, and Board of Managers of this unified society to be nominated by the Committee on Missions of the General Conference, as in the case of the members of the Board; the Secretaries of this Woman's Missionary Society, one for the Home and one for the Foreign Department, respectively, to be elected by the Board of Managers."

These four officials were not personally averse to a union of the societies if it could be affected without loss of spirit and momentum, but it was only just that the women whose zeal and love made the work possible should be given the privilege and right of determining the matter. There was no way to reason with the General Conference, as none but the delegated members (men only at that time) had the privilege of speaking on the floor, except in extreme cases by special vote of the body. Even the Committee on Missions, where the recommendation of the Bishops was considered, was not open to women.

The four women representing the woman's organizations conferred with men in the General Conference with whom they had acquaintance, but lobbying was a new rôle and at best a mean way to demand justice for worthy promoters of great enterprises. The sympathy of Dr. Young J. Allen, the venerable missionary from China, was stirred by the distress of the representatives of the women's boards, and he volunteered to convey anything they wished to every member of the Conference if it should be printed. It was agreed that Miss Bennett and Mrs. MacDonell should write a protest, thrown together in striking dodger form, and Dr. Allen and Mrs. Cobb would have it printed and distributed. There was need of haste, for the report from the Committee on Missions might come at any hour. The

scribes worked vigorously that night in preparing this dodger, when the electric lights went out in their room and it was impossible to have them renewed. In their dilemma they turned to the window where the moonlight from outside shone in bright rays, and by the light of the moon the protest was finished and made ready for the printer. Long before breakfast next morning Mrs. Cobb called for the manuscript, and with Dr. Allen's aid committed it to the printer for speedy work. It was finished and placed in the hands of every member of the General Conference that day.

The Committee on Missions could not understand a memorial from the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, concerning Scarritt Bible and Training School, and Miss Bennett was requested to explain the measure. At the given hour she and Mrs. MacDonell knocked on the door of the committee room; they were notified to wait outside until the memorial was up for discussion. When they were called Miss Bennett stood before the committee answering questions and giving information, and, having made the meaning clear, "the ladies were excused." For the larger question of the union of the societies none of the four representatives were given a hearing before the committee, though socially, outside of that room, every courtesy and gentle consideration was extended. In this day of national and Church enfranchisement of woman, it is difficult to visualize that situation at Birmingham in 1906. The reaction of this effort to force constitutional changes upon the women, and the result of the vigorous protest of their leaders, is interestingly recited in Miss Bennett's annual message to the Woman's Board of Home Missions at the first meeting after the General Conference:

"Knowing that legislation concerning the organized work of the women of the Church was being discussed by some of the best and most progressive members of

the General Conference, and knowing also that women had neither representation nor voice in that governing body of our Church, this Board delegated the President and the General Secretary to attend the meeting at Birmingham and, as far as possible, protect the constitutional rights and privileges of the Woman's Home Mission Society.

"The questions under consideration in the committee room affecting the work of the women were the advisability of uniting the Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Societies and the relation which the united society would sustain to the General Board of Missions. Overorganization, contention between auxiliaries, and a closer correlation of all the missionary forces of the Church were the reasons assigned for the changes desired.

"We were of one mind with the brethren on the subject of too many organizations, and had long been fully persuaded that a closer relation of all the Boards controlling departments of Church work was not only desirable but imperative if the best results were to be obtained. But how to diminish the number of organizations, or how under our present policy to effect closer coöperation without subordinating one Board to another and thereby denying to the women of the Church administrative influence in the splendid work they had built up and developed was a problem no one seemed able to solve.

"To unite the Woman's Home and the Foreign Missionary Societies would seem to a superficial student of the two organizations and their work an easy matter; but difficulties innumerable present themselves to one who has close acquaintance with the many and varied departments of each and who has had a personal responsibility for the selection of leaders, from the auxiliary officers to Conference and Executive Board members, all of whom must be women who can give time, strength, and money without remuneration. We made no objection to union, however, provided it could be satisfactorily done, but we persistently claimed that women who composed the two societies ought to have a right to say in their conference meetings whether they desired such a union.

"As a natural, reasonable and righteous plan for a closer correlation of all the missionary work of the

Church, we suggested a General Board or Council, composed *equally* of men and women, whose duty it should be to administer on all the missionary affairs of the Church; and, believing that this would meet with the approval of this body, we sent a memorial to that effect from the Woman's Home Mission Society. Such measures, however, were so foreign to the time-honored policy of Methodism that the mere formal announcement of the bill met with a good-humored ripple of laughter. . . .

"While no action was taken by the General Conference affecting this body or the society it represents during this quadrennium, a committee of thirteen was appointed to consider and present to the General Conference of 1910 some definite and workable plan for a closer correlation of the missionary forces of the Church. This commission is composed of nine men and four women, the women to be the Presidents and General Secretaries of the Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Societies."

A spirit of restlessness among the women, especially those to whom leadership in Conferences and Boards had been committed, was very great in the days following the General Conference. It was not easy to keep up the *esprit de corps* in an organization which found itself so seriously handicapped as the action of that great lawmaking body revealed. In many sections the women were asking if there could not be some change whereby a great part of the Church might have fair dealing. Miss Bennett had always believed in the perfect equality of man and woman and from earliest youth had been an advocate of political suffrage, but had refrained from pressing this conviction among the missionary women, that she might not create antagonism to the specific work of the Missionary Society. The question of Church suffrage had been thrust upon the women by the General Conference of 1906, and in 1909 she came to the Board meeting, after earnest prayer for guidance and wisdom, with this challenging message:

"As knowledge and responsibility have increased so have love and liberality of the women, and for the past two years these two women's societies, representing less than one-tenth of the women of the Church, have given annually about four hundred thousand dollars, a sum equal to nearly two-thirds of the total amount given by the entire membership of the Church. . . .

"If I know the minds of the missionary women throughout the field (and I think I do), any disturbance of the autonomy of the Woman's Missionary Societies, more especially any annulment of the administrative rights with which they have been vested in their Executive Boards for the last thirty-two years, will bring about a disturbance of relationships in the Church such as Methodism has never known. It will so shake the loyalty and confidence of the women that the decrease in missionary collections will result in nothing short of disaster for the work at home and abroad.

"Twenty years ago memorials were sent to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church asking for the removal of the restrictive law which prohibited women from being full lay members of the Church. Of course there was opposition, and some thoroughly honest opposition; for no progressive movement has ever had the sanction of the entire people. But the question was remanded to the Conferences for a vote, according to the law, and the demand was granted by a good majority. No great calamity has befallen either men or women because of this enlargement of woman's duties and liberties, and by every token the Lord still loves and leads that great division of his militant Methodist army. At the last Annual Conference the Wesleyan Church of England remanded the same question to its Synods, with the prospect of an overwhelming affirmative vote.

"Has not the fullness of God's time come for this same enlargement of the rights and privileges of the women of the Southern Methodist Church? Have we not manifested both our ability and our readiness for the responsibility of full lay membership of the Church? Shall we not seek it? All over the land in local Church affairs the pastors, assisted by a few godly women, are doing the official work of the Churches, while legal officers give their time and strength to exacting private or public business. Is this right or wise? If these same

women were associated in office with the men by the law of the Church, would they not almost surely win or provoke them to a larger interest in Church affairs as they do in home affairs?

"Is it not also a very evident fact that the active participation of the women in the Church work through the missionary societies has brought to a larger number of women than men a broader knowledge of the whole Church life, its organization, management, institutions, and trends of thought? Has it not done for them, in fact, what it is hoped the Laymen's Movement and the Methodist Brotherhood will do for the men? Can we doubt that this knowledge and its accompanying sense of responsibility have developed the women to the point that they are fitted for legal representation not only on the Quarterly Conference, but in the higher Conferences, wherever and in whatever capacity the laymen have a place and part?

"The women of this Board are the leaders of the great body of women who make up the auxiliaries in the individual Churches. These women expect you to act for them in every forward movement. To you is left not only their openly avowed sentiments or convictions, but to you is left the interpretation of that larger and deeper inner life which they have not formulated in words or proclaimed in action. This is what leadership means.

"The great apostle in his letter to the Churches of Galatia says: 'There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are one in Christ Jesus!' May the Spirit of God move this Board to send a memorial, signed by its every member, to the coming General Conference, urging that the women of the Church be granted all the rights and privileges of the laity of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South!"

This message was delivered in Savannah, Ga., where conservatism concerning women's spheres of activity was most marked, and it could not fail to startle the local Church. Even some members of the Board who resented the limitations placed on woman's relation to the Church were not yet convinced that women wanted any "rights." But the

great majority of the women gave serious thought to the subject, and soon rallied to Miss Bennett's recommendation and were ready to concur in the following memorial, which would go to the General Conference of 1910:

*"To the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, from the Woman's Board of Missions in Annual Session at Savannah, Ga.*

*"Dear Fathers and Brethren: Believing that the fullness of God's time has come for the more than half million women of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to have larger freedom in the ever-widening work of the Church that they may help to hasten more surely and speedily the coming of the kingdom of God, we respectfully petition that as an act of justice you will at this session of the General Conference take the needed action to secure for the women of the Church the full rights and privileges of the laity."*

The vote, which was taken by roll call, was twenty-nine for the measure and six against it. Every affirmative voter realized she had committed herself to an unpopular measure and that it would require labor and self-denial and loss of popularity on the part of the women to persuade the men of the next General Conference to support it. The work of executing the plans projected for the furtherance of this movement was committed to Mrs. Luke Johnson, of Georgia. There were only seven months between this action of the Board and the General Conference, so the opportunity for cultivating the Methodist Church in this ethical and just cause was too limited to have hoped for its carriage. Of Mrs. Johnson's work in its behalf Miss Bennett said:

*"Her splendid leadership and untiring energy have put the cause set forth in the memorial so clearly before the Church that every reading man and woman has had an opportunity to get an intelligent conception of the great principle involved and of the cause as it affects the membership and work of the Church. All of this has been accomplished in an incredibly short space of time. To have gotten as she has done a patient brother-*

ly hearing from so large a majority of our brethren in the ministry on the subject involving denominational ethics, Church law, and the legal recognition of woman's rights to a place in the governing councils of the Church, is an unmistakable evidence of the growth of that spirit which the Christ commended when he said: 'If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

There was not time for sufficient cultivation of the Church, and funds for the financial support of the movement were not adequately provided. With these handicaps, few promoters of the memorial dared hope it would pass on its first presentation. Miss Bennett's message to the Board in 1910, a few weeks prior to the General Conference, prepared the women for defeat:

"To many of us the matter of supreme importance during these months has been the reception and discussion by the Church at large of the memorial from the Board to the approaching General Conference, asking that the rights of the laity be granted to the women of the Church. To my mind no truer missionary measure has ever emanated from or claimed the attention of our Methodism. By every token it is to us another illuminating expression of the gospel message which our risen Lord commissioned his disciples to proclaim to all the world.

"Shrinking from opposition and public contest, we have followed our Leader afar off in this, have been slow of heart, and unable to bear the 'yet many things' he would have said to us; but now that we have obeyed his command to 'go forward,' we may not cease nor abate any effort until this work of righteousness is accomplished.

"That the work of education must continue for the next four years none of us can doubt. There are yet among us and of us many men and women to whom the 'traditions of men have made the Word of God of none effect,' and at every mention of a change or advance movement of the Church they shrink back in blind terror, full of a superstitious fear of some awful calam-

ity as a divine judgment. There are also many of our devoted missionary workers into whose lives the organized societies have put so much of spiritual, mental, and social development (to be gotten nowhere else in the Church) that the fear, and a reasonable one, of being deprived of this form of religious life and service prevents them from seeing that the Missionary Societies are only *methods of work*, while the memorial for equal lay representation for women involves *a great principle*, and one that lies at the very basis of individual liberty. 'For freedom did Christ set us free.' The Memorial will go to the General Conference; and as we have neither vote nor voice in that lawmaking body, the issue must remain with our brethren.

"Many of the best and truest men in the General Conference and in the great Church behind them are advocates of the cause for which the Memorial stands; and we must believe that every member of that body, whether he be for it or against it, desires as earnestly as we do to know and do God's will. The victory will be won not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the living God."

Few scenes in the General Conference have been more dramatic than that presented by the hundreds of memorials from the Woman's Board of Home Missions, Conference Woman's Home Mission Societies, district meetings, and auxiliaries praying for the "rights and privileges of the laity for the women of the Church." Every session was besieged with these memorials, until it was determined no more should be admitted from the floor but should go direct to the Committee on Revisals, to which this subject was referred. As evidence of the educative work of the Laity Rights Campaign of the preceding months were the invitations extended to the interested women to attend the sessions of the Committees on Missions and Revisals; it was in striking contrast to the preceding General Conference. A courteous hearing also was given to the home mission leaders who spoke for the Memorials before the Committee on Revisals. The report of the findings of the committee

provoked much discussion, for there were a number of men who favored the memorial, and by vote of the General Conference Miss Bennett was invited to speak to it. To speak without preparation when it was the first time in the history of the Church a woman's voice had been heard in a session of the General Conference was the supreme test of her zeal and faith in the righteousness of the cause. Because she believed in it as a right and just measure she dared speak even though she knew it was the most unsympathetic audience she had ever faced. The measure was overwhelmingly lost, but the women under her valiant generalship had put up a most splendid battle, and they never doubted the final outcome even in the throes of the first disappointment; they

“Never dreamed though right was worsted, wrong  
would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better.”

Let no one suppose that the opposition of the leaders of the Church to this movement was static; it was aggressive, and in every section there were some women who suffered ridicule, censure, and contempt. The brunt of condemnation, however, fell upon Miss Bennett, for in their judgment it was she who had put this unladylike feminist idea into the heads of the women. Prior to the Board meeting in Savannah in 1909, she was the most highly appreciated woman in the Church; bishops, preachers, Church officials honored her on all occasions, many of them conferring with her frequently concerning weighty affairs of the Church. Her influence seemed limitless. The extent of their disapproval of her leadership in this suffrage movement was revealed when the program for the Fourth Ecumenical Methodist Conference to be held at Toronto was in the making. In April, 1911, she was notified that she was on the program to speak on “Woman and Missions,” but before her letter of

acceptance was written a second communication announced that only delegates could speak before the Conference and the Southern Methodist Bishops had indicated that she had not been appointed; therefore the invitation was withdrawn. This was a unique experience for Belle H. Bennett, but it was easy to understand why she had thus been discredited in Methodist circles. A second communication was received as follows:

"AUGUST 29, 1911.

"Miss Belle H. Bennett, Richmond, Ky.

"*Dear Miss Bennett:* At its recent meeting at Atlantic City, the Executive Committee appointed you to deliver the first invited address on 'Woman and Missions,' at the second session, tenth day, Friday, October 13, of the Fourth Ecumenical Methodist Conference. It is indeed a great pleasure to me to make this notification. The committee was assured that your appointment as a delegate would be made, and so it is my pleasure again to ask you to accept. I trust nothing has occurred to prevent your prompt acceptance.

"Very sincerely,

H. K. CARROLL."

Miss Bennett's personal answer to this communication in the light of subsequent history is a document of interest:

"Dr. H. K. Carroll, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

"*My Dear Dr. Carroll:* I greatly appreciate the personal note in your last communication. I must, however, wait until I am notified by the College of Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, that I have been appointed a delegate to the Ecumenical Methodist Conference before I can either accept or decline the appointment for an address. The situation is interesting to say the least!

"Very sincerely,

BELLE H. BENNETT."

Miss Bennett's marvelous spirit of love and patience and continuous courtesy to those whose zeal would punish her for obedience to what she recognized as heaven-inspired responsibility was most noteworthy. The source of her

"quietness and confidence" is revealed in this letter to Mrs. R. L. Kirkwood, dated September 9, 1911:

"Your good comforting letter came yesterday. I have realized day by day the truth of all you say. I have wondered at the measure of peace and joy God has given me or rather that I have been willing to receive from him during the past two months. As I wrote you in my last, I claimed the fifth and sixth verses of the 37th Psalm in the beginning of our movement for a larger place in the Church for women, and I know in whom I have believed and that he will not fail to keep until that day. Quite recently a friend, who for many years has been one of God's chosen, and a woman of prevailing prayer, wrote me that she had claimed the 18th Psalm for me. Read it, and you will see what a great claim it is.

"The latest development in connection with the Toronto drama is a recent letter from Dr. Carroll, of New York, announcing that I am on the program for a ten minutes' address on 'Women and Missions,' he having been assured by the Southern contingent of the Program Committee that I would be a delegate. I promptly wrote him that I could neither accept nor decline until I had been notified by the College of Bishops that I was a delegate. The matter is amusing as well as interesting."

It seemed so fitting and necessary that Miss Bennett should represent the women of the Southern Methodist Church at the great Ecumenical Methodist Conference that the Executive Committee of the Woman's Missionary Council sent a dignified request to the College of Bishops asking for her appointment as a delegate, but no response was made. Several women were named as delegates who were known to oppose the "Laity Rights" memorial, and to one was given, by the Bishops, the place on the program assigned to Miss Bennett, but she promptly declined the honor. On October 5 Miss Bennett wrote as follows to Mrs. George Call:

*"My Dear Sister:* I do not go to Toronto; the College of Bishops has never notified me that I am their appointed delegate, and I have too much regard for myself, the Woman's Council, and the women of Methodism generally to present myself at the Ecumenical without the proper credentials. I note, as do the Church people generally, that I am published on the program far and wide as one of the women from the Western Division who will take part in the meeting. I was also notified by Dr. Carroll, Secretary of the Program Committee, about the first of September that I was again nominated by the Southern representatives, who assured him that I would be the delegate, but, as I have said before, I have received no notification from the College of Bishops to that effect and, therefore, do not go."

On the morning of October 6, the third day of the meeting at Toronto a telegram, signed by the Secretary of the College of Bishops, was placed in Miss Bennett's hand, saying: "The Bishops have appointed you delegate to the Ecumenical." She immediately wired to friends in Nashville and Kansas City to inquire what they considered her duty. The friends were too deeply interested in the situation to be safe advisers, and in turn they submitted the inquiry to disinterested parties whose judgment was trustworthy. The consensus of opinion was that, under the circumstances, she would violate no obligation by refraining from accepting the appointment. Throughout this remarkable struggle she assumed that her adversaries as honestly believed they were doing the right thing as she knew she was, and it lifted her above personal animosities. That she suffered is evidenced in this letter of March 19, 1912, to her fellow worker, Mrs. R. W. MacDonell:

"Your letter of this morning so expressed my feeling of depression that it actually relieved the tension and cheered me up for the time being. Only yesterday I said to my sister-in-law, Mrs. James Bennett: 'I am trying to see clearly my duty about giving up the office I

hold in the Missionary Society. I feel as if I had fought with beasts at Ephesus this year; I can't keep it up.' But, dear heart, neither you nor I have a right to retire until we force the Church to put a full share of responsibility for its conduct and development on the women. Whether the majority of them want it or not, they ought to be compelled to bear it.

"It is the compelling, overriding action of men who as honestly believe they are doing the right thing, the fair thing, as we do not that troubles. They are not wholly to blame in believing that women are inherently inferior and incapable—women believe and act on that supposition themselves, and why should men think and treat them otherwise? We are in a hard *pioneer field*, and I have never been in any other kind until the last few years. I have never labored under any fear for the growth of the work. I know that will continue, whether we live or die. Missions, home and foreign, are the center of a great world current which no man can stop or seriously hinder. My fear has been, and is still, for the loss to the Church (universal) itself, through a weak and irresponsible womanhood. Its a great human body with one side paralyzed. Arousing and interesting the women at home has been the best form of mission work we have done."

Miss Bennett was convinced that the thrusting of the woman question upon the Church by the General Conference of 1906 was God's leading to awaken a great body of women in the South to the religious teaching of Christian Scriptures concerning the essential equality of man and woman. "Both were created in God's image and to both God came in the flesh as Jesus Christ," she repeatedly affirmed in her public utterances. Certain paragraphs of these speeches in behalf of the Laity Rights movement have been preserved which show how deeply religious she considered the subject, among them the following:

"Does it seem strange and unwomanly that these women standing where they do should believe that the world needs their strength and wisdom, united and combined with the strength and wisdom of its best manhood, to guide and govern home and Church and State?

"Woman's right to give birth to the race, to labor for it, and in some measure to shape its development has so far seemed an inalienable right: and to maintain that right in its entirety, preparing herself—mind, soul, and body—for the high and holy calling is the cause for which she is contending.

"The so-called world-wide movement for the liberation and uplift of woman is distinctly and insistently the result of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men. From the time when its divine Founder rebuked in scathing terms the teachings of the scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites of Judaism, the dominant note of Christianity, even in its lowest forms, has been a note of liberty. A Christian civilization which does not generate and develop a spirit of individual, civil, and religious liberty is impossible."

When the first memorial for laity rights was lost by vote of the General Conference, the women promptly reorganized for a second campaign. Continuous agitation of the subject by splendid leaflets and bulletins won many to their standard. The General Conference vote in 1914 was especially interesting, as in their zeal the opponents presented a woman to plead against woman's suffrage in the Church. Women on both sides of the question were invited to speak before the Committee on Revisals and on the Conference floor. While the measure was again lost, there was very evident growth of sentiment in its favor.

A third time Miss Bennett rallied the Church forces for another effort to get fair dealing for its womanhood. During the twelve years that the question of woman suffrage was before the Church, a splendid educational program was conducted, especially in the last quadrennium, through the brilliant *Laity Rights Bulletin*, edited by Miss Estelle Haskin. The cost of financing this continuous battle was borne by personal donations; the money of the missionary treasury was never touched. By 1918 it was so apparent that world currents were moving toward national enfranchise-

ment of women that the Church could not afford to stand against the laity rights measure. Woman's splendid achievement in the World War and her marked ability under responsibility had greatly changed man's mind concerning her power to grip and handle public interests.

The General Conference in session in Atlanta, Ga., was ready to vote for laity rights, which the roll call showed, as it registered (May 14, 1918) 265 votes in favor and 57 against the grant. When the Chairman of the Conference announced the measure carried, enthusiasm ran high on the Conference floor. The men rose from their seats, bowed and waved greetings to the women in the galleries who had striven these many years for this just cause. The women stood *en masse* and bowed to the men in recognition of the victory won by their votes.

Miss Bennett was conspicuous by her absence from the victorious group at that hour. All the long years of her leadership she had suffered opposition by serving unpopular causes which seemed forlorn hopes when she espoused them. Like other great leaders she had grown "to know that real joy lies in the battle and not in the victory." Her knowledge of constitutional Church law made her realize the hardest part of this battle was ahead. Friends rushed to find her in the rear of the battalion whose movements she had directed more than a decade. When congratulations were showered upon her she raised her hands and said: "Don't women! Don't! We are not so foolish as to count the battle won. This matter must be remanded to the Conferences, where the greater struggle must begin!" And she was ready then and there to begin her plans for carrying the battle of the forty-odd Conferences which then constituted the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Before she left Atlanta, upon the adjournment of the General Conference, she issued a clarion call to arms through the *Atlanta (Ga.) Constitution*, of May 22, as follows:

**DR. BELLE BENNETT SENDS MESSAGE TO WOMEN OF SOUTHERN METHODISM**

"The memorial and petitions presented by the women to the General Conference were referred to the proper committees and later reached the body for action. All the requests touching the missionary society were granted.

"The memorial asking for full membership in the Church for women created perhaps the greatest interest and warmest discussion.

"From the beginning, it was evident that a very large majority of the body was heartily in favor of granting laity rights to the women of the Church. However, in a few days our committee was informed that some sharp opposition with regard to the form of the memorial and as to its full meaning had developed in the Committee on Revisals, to which it had been referred.

"On May 14 the measure came before the house, and, after less than thirty minutes' debate, was passed by an overwhelming majority, despite the fact that a 'rider,' involving the constitution of the Board of Missions, had been attached to it by the committee. When the chair announced that the measure was adopted, the enthusiasm of the men was so great that they rose from their seats, and, turning to the women in the galleries, waved hands and handkerchiefs, cheering with hearty, sympathetic approval.

"The following morning, in a formal paper, the College of Bishops declared that the admittance of women to the councils of the Church was a constitutional question and could not be decided even by a two-thirds vote of the General Conference. The body immediately reaffirmed the action of the previous day, thereby 'overruling the bishop veto,' thus sending the matter down to the Annual Conferences for final decision.

"By a resolution later in the session the bishops were requested to present the matter to all the Annual Conferences of Southern Methodism within the next twelve months.

"A constitutional question thus referred to the Annual Conferences requires a two-thirds vote of all the members of all the Conferences to legalize the change.

"Many prominent friends of the cause said that the 'men so sincerely and earnestly desired to give the women full membership in the Church it was evident

that it would pass the Annual Conferences by a large majority.'

"While the women of the Council also believe that God's time has come for woman to assume her full responsibility in the Church, they realize that it means indefatigable and patient work on the part of the friends of the cause, both men and women, to clearly present the issue to the eight or nine thousand preachers and laymen who compose the Conferences and in whose hands, under God, rests the final decision.

"My appeal to the Church now is for constant and united prayer that the Holy Spirit may guide and direct in all this work, and that through the long effort that has been made and the final result that will inevitably come, the spiritual life of the Church may be quickened and the name of Jesus, the Saviour and liberator of women, may be glorified until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ."

Skirmishes with forces near at hand are far more difficult and deadly than the battles fought at long range. They were not easy maneuvers she set for the women to manage in the Conferences, but in these dozen years of warfare for justice and fair play enthusiastic recruits were won, of whom she wrote:

"In this world-wide movement of women, for women, by women, the significant part is the *new* woman—*new* because schoolroom and college doors have been thrown wide open to her; *new*, because the law has made it possible for her to receive, obtain, and hold property; *new*, because the world has been opened to her; *new*, because, above all, a trained mind and the open Word of God have made the *will* of God a real and personal thing to her."

In her eagerness for reports from the conferences, Miss Bennett wrote to Miss Howell at Jefferson City, Mo., while attending the Southwest Missouri Conference:

"Please, *please* dear have some one wire me as soon as the 'Laity Rights' vote is taken. Mention the num-

ber voting on the affirmative and the number on the negative. I am, figuratively speaking, standing with mouth and eyes open night and day, waiting for these messages, always with a prayer in my heart, for *I believe that liberty in Church and State to the women of America means the uplift and evangelization of the non-Christian women in all the dark lands.* I am standing in the trenches with Him, watching the Conferences go over the top!"

The human side of this veteran leader is found in her account of one of these skirmishes at an Annual Conference in which she participated. The letter was written November 16, 1918, to her Secretary, whose splendid help strengthened and prolonged her active service for the Church:

"To-day in the midst of driving rain but with a big delegation, at noon, the 'Laity Rights' vote was taken and 'went over the top' for us: 234 for and only 38 against. We were overwhelmed with surprise, but succeeded in conducting ourselves with dignified calmness, as if it were just what we had expected. Since then I have dined with a charming party of *fellow Church women* rejoicing in *full Church membership* in our minds. I have just gotten in through a driving rain, so grateful for *all* blessings of the day—you one of the *special*, my precious deaconess."

The victory for "Laity Rights" was won. To Miss Bennett it was a challenge for the Woman's Missionary Council to go forward with renewed zeal in obedience to the age-old commission of the Christ. Her address to the Council in 1919 said:

"Again, this good year 1918-19 will long be memorable in the history of Southern Methodism as the time in which the Conferences of the Church, at home and abroad, by an overwhelming vote, gave women full membership in the Church. For seventy-five years they had served as its handmaidens, supported its institutions, and worshiped at its altars as minors. They had no voice in its councils and no lawful place in its Confer-

ences. Appeal after appeal for justice and release from this bondage had been made to its great representative body, the General Conference, but only to receive a negative answer. To some among us, both men and women, the waiting seemed long; but faith in Him who said, 'All power is given unto me,' never failed; and one year ago the splendid body of men that met in General Conference at Atlanta, Ga., registered its vote in an affirmative answer to that long-continued appeal with an impetus that swept down through the Church, carrying with it a three-fourths vote from forty of the forty-five Conferences of the entire Church.

"We sit together to-day in this Council for the first time with all the privileges and rights of laymen by reason of this legal membership in the Church whose name we have so long borne. Are we ready for these new opportunities and privileges? Do our pulses quicken and our hearts thrill with joy as we read again the great command that has been ringing down through the centuries, 'Go ye into all the world'? Go to the eight hundred million of the earth's inhabitants that still sit in heathen darkness, never having heard the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Having won the battle for woman's full membership in the Church, this far-sighted woman realized the law would become a dead letter unless it should be followed by effort of the women themselves to promote the election of women to the various Conferences and governing bodies of the Church. Persistently she urged this upon the women. Her satisfaction when they were chosen was personal, as is shown in this letter to Mrs. W. H. Pemberton:

"You don't know how pleased I am that Dr. Miller and the brethren were good enough to recognize the eternal fitness of things and elect you as a delegate to the Annual Conference. Of course my feelings would have been hurt if you hadn't let me know; so on your life, don't you fail to be there, and pray, sing, or—preach, whatever the brethren ask you to do. I know we can trust your judgment and feel you will do, in a dignified way, whatever is required of you."

As General Conference approached she felt great concern that the women would be given a large representation. That she recognized the necessity of special effort to accomplish this measure was indicated by this letter to Mrs. F. F. Stephens, dated June 22, 1921:

"Now, to another important matter. While in Nashville, Miss Howell and Miss Haskin and I discussed at length the question as how best to get a Laity Committee in the Church that would work out a plan by which we could approach every Annual Conference with the request that a proportionate number of women be sent to the General Conference. We all know it is a delicate matter and must be wisely and carefully handled. The men naturally feel honored at being sent to the General Conference, though many of them do not go, or remain more than a few days. I believe that almost, perhaps every, Conference will send one woman, but the chances are that many women will be nominated and elected because of wealth, social position, or some special courtesy or personal kindness to a presiding elder or Church leader.

"A letter from Mrs. Piggott says: 'I am writing to the presiding elders in my Conference whom I know well; and after a meeting in Louisville next week, I shall know the best course to pursue with some of the others. I think now, I shall ask that we decide on one or two representative women, and ask key women in each district to approach their influential lay delegates and pastors, with regard to the election of these special women. Each District Secretary and Conference officer knows who the delegates from her district are, and the Conference officers are pretty well distributed in our districts; so I think the plan will work for us very well.'

"I think Mrs. Piggott will do this wisely and well in her Conference, but she is a superior woman. Please, please think and pray over this matter, and let me know if you can think of any plan that might help and not hinder."

In accordance with the expectation of the Church, the Kentucky Conference honored itself by electing Miss Ben-

nett to membership in the General Conference of 1922 on its first ballot for lay representation. For eight months Miss Bennett looked forward to this meeting, full of plans for the ongoing of the Church. But God had other work for this great soldier of the Cross. Six weeks before the General Conference convened at Hot Springs, Ark., disease claimed "the outworn vesture of the spirit" and held her prostrate while the Church militant moved onward with its work of law revision and law making. The grief, the disappointment, the wonder of her friends and the Church that she could not be there is expressed perfectly in this message sent by Dr. W. F. Tillett, long-time Dean of the School of Theology of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn:

"It is a source of profound regret to your many friends throughout the Church that after leading the women of Southern Methodism to the promised land of membership in the General Conference you could not be present on the opening day of the General Conference to enter with those of your sisters who had been elected like yourself to this high honor and this important service.

"We are hoping that before the session is far advanced you can be present at Hot Springs and claim your seat. On reaching the promised land, Moses was 120 years of age and had served his day by the will of the Lord, and had to bow to nature's law; but you (our woman-Moses) are young enough for us to hope and pray with confidence that if you should not be able to attend this session of the Conference at all, you will have the vigor of body, mind, and heart to represent the women and your Annual Conference in the General Conference that will meet four years hence. May it be so!

"I write this line simply to let you know of the sincere regret of Mrs. Tillett and myself in your enforced absence from the General Conference membership in which you had so nobly won by your splendid service and courageous leadership, and to assure you of our Christian love and sympathy in your sickness."

Dr. W. W. Pinson's message at the close of the General Conference opened to her heart the high honor with which her name was held throughout the Church:

"It would have been a joy to you to have heard the expressions of affection and honor with which your name was mentioned during the General Conference. The entire Church is indebted to you for the high standards for womanhood and the progressive measures for the entire Church that you have so eloquently and so powerfully enforced, both by example and precept, for so many years. Your influence and leadership have erected a monument in the heart of Methodist people which will defy the ravages of time. In your hours of silence and suffering, you have reason to rejoice in the consciousness of the service you have rendered and are still rendering by your influence."

Miss Bennett's disappointment in being too ill to take her place in the General Conference was great, but the one quest of her life—to know God's will and to do it—soon quieted depression and sustained her until, like that other great leader of the early Christian Church, she could exclaim: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, I am ready for the crown of righteousness which the Lord has laid up for me."

## CHAPTER XIV FRIENDSHIPS

OF Miss Bennett it may be said, as it was of the seventeenth century singer and churchman, John Donne, "Friendship was her second religion." The measureless gift of her heart to those she called friends, the constant loyalty and personal concern for their temporal and spiritual welfare, with her unquestioning, childlike acceptance of their response to her own emotions, made her friendships sacred and lifted them into realms of unending relations.

Miss Bennett's natural characteristics laid the foundation for large and varied friendships. Her mental alertness, her ever surprising humor, her gentle courteous consideration of others, her honesty, sincerity, and great heart of love and human sympathy could not fail to draw and hold captive, as by magnetic power, men and women, whether they were the great of the earth or folk of plain walks of life. It was this power which made the homesick Russian immigrant and his timid wife in a junk-shop on the East Side, New York, recognize a friendly soul and unburden their hearts to her—a stranger—as she examined their wares. It was not the purchase of their brass candlestick, with its seven burners, that rejoiced their hearts—it was the emotion and aspiration registered in response to her own sensitive spirit that made their faces glow. It was this power that bridged the racial separation and made possible the friendship between herself and Josie Bates, the Negro woman of her home town, upon whom she relied for spiritual help when problems arose or burdens pressed. This power of spirit, in its rich, beautiful setting, drew college men and women and students to her side longing to be called friends.

No sorrow or care came to those Miss Bennett called friends that she did not share, and she always searched for ways and means to lift financial strain when she found one so burdened. She spared herself no pain nor fatigue if to help one involved travel or hardship. With the same measure she shared their joy, even down to their children's children. As she gave herself to others the quickening quality of her influence called out their best powers, and they delighted to love and serve her. Few persons commanded the loyalty and devotion it was the good pleasure of her friends to extend to her. The remarkable quality of friendship Miss Bennett generated was, that in the face of contradictions her friends trusted her loyalty and devotion. The swift response given when she called for sacrificial service attested their devotion. Under conflicting obligations there were occasions when she appeared to drop a friend, but when he had need, or her own love demanded it, she took up the friendship as though there had been no gap. If a friend were in trouble, she would defend him no matter how she might loathe its cause. There are even records of her defending one friend at the expense of another. In their loyalty her friends understood that this care for the offender was the virtue of sympathy carried beyond even her own sense of justice. In her official capacity she sometimes needed to prod a member of a committee whose sensitiveness hampered her freedom; turning to one whose friendship she trusted she would rebuke or urge as though that one were the offender. This was supreme proof of her friendship. The loyalty that stood tests such as these had its spring in her own deep understanding of the meaning of friendship. She asked nothing she would not do or endure for those of whom she asked it.

Miss Bennett's friendships puzzled some people. She was often the refuge of men and women of wavering faith

or of those upon whom criticism or harsh judgment concerning adherence to the dogma of the Church was visited. Her own faith and adherence to the Church was positive, but she could distinguish between faith and the forms of faith, and her breadth of mind and sympathetic, courageous spirit enabled her to understand that under the out-leading of the Holy Spirit some may

“Grow too great  
For narrow creeds of right and wrong which fade  
Before the unmeasured thirst for good.”

This power of giving herself in their hours of need and her generosity in their differences of thought stayed wavering feet, created courageous hope, and sealed bonds of friendship. She was not indiscriminate in selection of friends; she would turn from stupid persons and say like Charles Lamb: “Common natures do not suffice me; good people (as they are called) won’t serve. I want individuals.” Yet people wondered how Miss Bennett gave so much time and love and strength to persons uncongenial by nature. Some who loved her resented these friendships as a tax upon her strength. “She lets herself be monopolized,” they said. But this woman of spirit vision had discernment where others failed to see hidden possibilities. By giving herself for these whom others valued not, she called forth as by magic the best powers of some souls and set them to work for the kingdom. It was one of the most Christlike things she did, for like Him, whose friends were “publicans and sinners,” she gave herself that their weakness might become strength.

Mrs. Ida Harrison, of Lexington, Ky., whose brilliant service for the kingdom Miss Bennett held in highest esteem, vindicated the axiom, “The most transforming influences in life are personal friendships,” when she declared, “Friendship with Miss Bennett is most expen-

sive." The great value of her friendship lay in her ability to stimulate and encourage larger development of one's powers. She could never be satisfied without growth, constant growth and activity for herself, and in love she held the same standards for her friends. There were times when she was the despair of feebler folk or those of slower vision, but her merciless sincerity accepted nothing less than the best of which they were capable. This letter from Misses Tina and Emma Tucker reveals this concern for her friends:

"One thing she said to us, with her hands on our shoulders in the long ago, when both of us were well and busy in evangelistic work, was this: 'I pray every day for you both, that God will keep you humble. You are talking or reading God's Word to the crowds, and he lets you help them. They tell you that, and there is danger that self may be glorified rather than God.' How we thanked her and profited by those candid, sincere words!"

Miss Bennett's wide circle of friends and close relations with her fellow workers never won her from deep affection for her immediate family, and those who had claims upon her were never disregarded. The nieces and nephews, whether in her home town or removed to distant States, were sources of pleasure and comfort or pride in their successes and joy, and objects of tenderest concern when illness or affliction came. One who lived and toiled by her side thus describes her life within this inner circle:

"Her devotion to her kinspeople was always a beautiful thing to see. She loved her brother, the last one of six, with all the affection of her great heart, telling me again and again how he made it possible for her to give her entire time to the work of the Church by taking charge of her business interests. Whenever her work necessitated a trip to New York she always found time to have her brother's two daughters, students at Vassar College, as her week-end guests. During the

summer vacation and at Christmas, as many as eight or ten of her nieces and nephews were her guests at the hotel for meals. She declared it was her only way to visit with them. They were never happier than when she shared in some of their pleasures."

The tenacity of Miss Bennett's nature held her to friendships of her youth and childhood with unabated sincerity even when time and circumstances changed their viewpoints of life or distance prevented personal association. Those who traveled with her in the West recall how she always went out of her route to spend a day, or even a few hours, with Mrs. Jennie Moran and Miss Belle Breck, daughters of her beloved old teacher. There was Miss Laura Clay, whose spirit met and stimulated her own in their common faiths in the righteousness of universal suffrage, and Miss Lucia Burnam, Mrs. Jane McDowell Holton, Mrs. Cornelia Clay, and Miss Lucile Crooke, all friends in Richmond from whom there had been no separation of heart or of association throughout her life. Then there were Miss Kate Helm, Mrs. Lucas Brodhead, and Mrs. Eliza Sharp Young and a host of others whose friendship came in the gay days of youth. No greater proof of affection could be given than the post cards and letters Miss Bennett sent to friends when traveling abroad or journeying to Conference and Board meetings in the homeland. Typical of dozens of letters and messages is this one to Miss Sallie Burnam, of Richmond, written March 25, 1901, while in the midst of reorganizing the North Alabama Conference Woman's Home Mission Society, a task of consuming absorption:

*"My Dear Miss Sallie: Mary writes that you have not been so well since I left home. My heart aches to think of you as sick and suffering. You have been so full of helpfulness and strength for other people, such a blessing to so many around you that, somehow, I want to tell you to-day you have been witnessing for*

God and righteousness all these years. If an earthly friend can sympathize and suffer with you in your suffering, how much greater must be the sympathy and love of our Saviour who says: 'Even as a Father has loved me, so also have I loved you.' If we could only understand the wonderful meaning in those words, many things that seem hard in life would become easy. May He be very real to you and very, very close to you in your sickness."

Miss Bennett's heart clung to the normal things of life and on occasions of special joy or celebration she loved to have part with her friends. If there was a birth, a young girl graduate, or a wedding in the home of a friend, gifts adapted to the event not only showed her love but her special interest manifested by the selection. Friends wondered how she found time to select, wrap, and address the many gifts it was her custom to send at the Christmas season. To many she sent checks of varying value, when choice was difficult or the money would serve a wiser purpose. The Christmas after her death the bookkeeper where she kept her accounts said to her brother: "Mr. Bennett, I miss Miss Bennett's Christmas checks this year; every Christmas since I have been in this bank she has given scores of checks, as presents to people living hundreds of miles away." She was a royal lover, this great-hearted woman!

Outstanding in Miss Bennett's friendships were those which grew out of her effort to establish the Scarritt Bible and Training School. Chief among these friends was Mrs. S. C. Trueheart, who always seconded her every effort in its behalf. So perfect was Miss Bennett's devotion that she placed an annuity gift, for Mrs. Trueheart's benefit, with the Woman's Board of Home Missions. Mr. and Mrs. Sam Jones, for whom she held the most grateful appreciation, were among those whose gift of friendship came through their effort in behalf of the school. To Dr. Weyman Potter, of Georgia, she was bound by high ties of mutual apprecia-

tion which her journal entry of October 7, 1891, reveals: "I cannot get over my feeling of personal loss in Dr. Potter's death. He was one of the strongest, most liberal, and best men in our Church. He was woman's friend."

A friendship between herself and Bishop E. R. Hendrix developed through the kinship of mutual interest in the Training School, which ran as a golden cord through the lives of both in ceaseless activities for a third of a century. Then there were Rev. J. J. Dickey, Dr. and Mrs. Poynter, Prof. and Mrs. J. C. Lewis, and a host of others who became beloved friends through their common concern for the building of Sue Bennett School in the Kentucky mountains.

Miss Bennett's "heritage of leadership" brought to her side a great group of men and women whose world vision and singleness of purpose responded to her inner light, whom, like Jeremy Taylor, she called "soul friends." One of the earliest of these was Dr. David Morton, the first Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Church Extension of the Southern Methodist Church. The breadth of this great man's spirit was shown in his oft-repeated statement when reckoning with her gifts of leadership: "How I would love to see Belle Bennett in the United States Congress!" This was in the days when few men ventured to *think* such things. When she confided to him the difficulties in the way of organized home missions and her own irritation over the limitations the Church put upon its women members, he quickly caught her viewpoint and urged with the vehemence of his great personality: "Speak it out, Miss Bennett, speak it out to the Church. The men are lots more afraid of you women than you are of them." Just what this friendship meant in the life and work of Miss Bennett is pictured in this paragraph of her personal tribute at the time of his death, published in *Our Homes*, April, 1898:

"I can scarcely remember the time when I did not know, love, and honor Dr. David Morton. In all my Church life he has been one to whom I could go, feeling sure that I would receive help and encouragement. He was always approachable, always strong and fearless in his advocacy of what he believed to be right. Instinctively I turned to him in time of doubt or need and never failed to receive sympathy and kindly advice."

Those who have scanned other chapters of this book have read for themselves the "kinship of soul" between Miss Bennett and Miss Harriet Thompson, woman of prevailing prayer, to whom she carried her burdens when she needed power beyond her human strength; and Mrs. Emily Allen Siler, fellow pioneer and brave heart, whose use of choice English she craved for the public utterances of the struggling organization God placed in their hands; and Mrs. L. P. Smith, whose faith and zeal helped bring more than one of her great visions to reality. There was also Mrs. J. H. Yarbrough, upon whose spontaneous humor and great common sense she relied when seeking sane issues of difficult complications; and Mrs. W. W. Carré, whose large business experience and moral support in new ventures for the King gave courage to go forward. It was in her home Miss Bennett always found a haven of rest when weary and worn from long journeys across the continent. Who has failed, as they have read these pages, to recognize how she depended upon the faith and counsel of Mrs. L. H. Glide? Mrs. R. L. Kirkwood was another friend to whom she turned when vexed with problems sore. It was to her beloved "Sister Luke" (Mrs. Luke G. Johnson) she committed many problems, because "she sees through things," and of her she asked much difficult service, never failing to have swift response. Who that knew Miss Bennett did not know her soul kinswoman, Miss M. L. Gibson, joint mother with herself of the women who went out of Scarritt Bible and Training School to serve all over the world?

While visiting Miss Kate Helm, daughter of General Ben Hardin Helm, in Elizabethtown, Ky., Miss Bennett met Miss Mary Helm. Miss Mary was older by ten years or more, but their spirits met on common ground of intellectual pursuits, culture, and high idealism which ripened into fast friendship as they engaged in the woman's missionary work of the Church. Miss Helm's hearty indorsement of the Scarritt Bible and Training School and subsequent suffering because of her zeal in its behalf, drew them together in closer bonds, until 1896, when they became officially related in the woman's home mission work. The molding influence of the older friend and the eager quest of the younger to know God's way for their beloved work so swayed each that

"Thought leaped out to wed with thought  
Ere thought could wed itself with speech."

There came a day when differences of judgment concerning the union of the missionary organizations of the Church made coöperation in service impossible for Miss Helm. The workfellowship was broken, and she returned to Kentucky. In a letter to Miss Bennett a glimpse of the depth of her love and suffering over the separation their differences caused is given:

"HELM PLACE, July 12, 1910.

"*My Dear Belle:* There has not been a day in the months past that I have not thought of you many, many times—always lovingly and with a deep sense of oneness with you despite surface differences. We are both women of strong convictions, independence of thought, and freedom of action. It is not unnatural that we (from these very qualities) should at times differ in our views, and being true to our convictions should honestly and vigorously stand for them, and yet grant each to the other the same right. In all sincerity we differed in regard to unification of the Boards, neither of us having any personal feeling or personal

ends to serve. It was a new experience to oppose you, and the pain could only be borne by the unshaken conviction that I was right. You were the victor, and I yielded up my weapon—and you were no longer my opponent but my own beloved friend, bound to me in the close bonds of *fellowship in Christ*, ‘a bond stronger than friendship and nearer than kinship.’ As we can say, ‘I am persuaded that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus,’ so also may we with all reverence add, ‘Nothing can separate us from those to whom the love of God in Christ has bound us.’ My dear *Soul Sister* we will forget the difference of opinion and the struggle it involved, leaving it as an incident of the past to be remembered only as it increases our loving respect for the other. ‘What God hath bound together let not man put asunder’ applies to other things than matrimony. The soul union that he formed between us cannot be sundered by man, or time or aught else as long as we are true to ourselves, to each other, and to him.”

Within three years Miss Helm “was not, for God took her.” In perfect mental clearness, as she waited for death to emancipate her spirit from its earthly tabernacle, her thoughts turned to Miss Bennett, who was in Brazil at the time. In the last hour she said to one who had worked with them both: “Tell Belle how I love her, and tell her how I loved to work with her. How sweet it was we three working together! We had differences, but they were mental; we always had one spirit. Tell Belle how glad I am to go—tell Belle how I love her.”

The wealth of human love Miss Bennett knew how to spend upon her fellow workers is revealed in this letter to one with whom she worked for twenty years:

MUDLAVIA, IND., July 1, 1916.

“*My Dear Friend*: Your telegram came the evening of the 29th. I am glad you are going to Junaluska, and I so wish you would remain all the month of July, not on furlough, but with Miss Parchment with you. You wouldn’t be as comfortable in some ways as at home,

but you would be in the higher altitude and the bracing mountain atmosphere and not have half as many interruptions. I wish you would get out of Nashville during the heat, dear; you owe it to yourself, the work, and I think a little bit to me, for I am sure you have had no friend—not even the members of your own family—who has loved you more dearly these years than God has let us work together. As you grow older and the work grows in size, intensity, and difficulties, health and strength must be considered and conserved. Mrs. Trueheart and Mrs. Cobb were wise to spend their summers at Monteagle, and I honor them for the wisdom they showed in this.

"I just grieved after writing you to go to Los Angeles. That night and later as I thought of all the trip involved and might bring forth in the way of annoyance I was heart sick. . . . I would rather trust your direction from Nashville than any committee you could appoint in Los Angeles under present conditions. Don't go, don't take that long, tiresome trip. Miss Head goes to Nashville Monday; I will perhaps stay on for the baths three or four days longer. Write me at Richmond."

When this fellow worker retired from the active work of the Woman's Missionary Council, Miss Bennett's assurance of devotion is thus disclosed:

"I am sure that you know that I love you, love you and depend on you as I do on only one or two other persons in the world. To have you leave the work would mean another heart sorrow for me, another separation, scarcely less painful than death."

Another picture of the warmth of this woman's heart is given in this message to Miss Elizabeth Billingsley, long-time friend and fellow worker at the Scarritt Bible and Training School:

*"Dear Sister and Fellow Worker: I am sure you cannot know how I, personally, have appreciated the self-sacrificing work that you have done, all of these years behind us, in the Training School, and I know you will*

not understand until you get to heaven how grateful I am for your friendship, which has meant so much to me. There are so many new women in the Council who have known the Training School only by name and have not known the staff at all, I sometimes feel relieved and glad at the thought of the end which is so close for all of us to whom God gave the great privilege and joy of laying the foundation and building on it for twenty-eight years. How many, many close friends you will meet when you open your eyes on the other side of life's veil, in the house of many mansions. If I go first, rest assured that I shall give you a glad welcome. If you precede me, I know I shall have the joy of being welcomed by you, and we will talk of the things that God let us do in this kindergarten life."

Every successful Wesley House in Southern Methodism owes its life, under God, not alone to the City Mission Board whose generosity makes its maintenance possible, but to the executive ability and invincible spirit of the pioneer Head Resident and her fellow workers who live in them and touch life with the people. When Miss Bennett first visited the Wesley House in Dallas, Tex., in 1903, she encountered the courageous, original, enterprising spirit of Miss Estelle Haskin, the first Head Resident. The response of spirit between the two women was immediate, and a friendship of surpassing devotion grew out of the qualities of mind and heart that complemented each other. Miss Haskin became one of those friends upon whom Miss Bennett called for service no matter how difficult, and she was moved from one hard task to another in the work of the Church until at last her skill brought to pass a real Bureau of Missionary Publicity and Literature, for which Miss Bennett had striven twenty years. The tender regard of the older woman for the younger was manifested in her last will and testament by the legacy of a personal keepsake which she had valued for sentimental reasons a half century.

In many respects the one person with whom Miss Ben-

nett was most closely bound in the bonds of fellowship with Christ was the late Bishop Walter R. Lambuth. From the day of their meeting, July 2, 1891, at the laying of the corner stone of the Scarritt Bible and Training School, they were united in absolute faith in God and amazing faith in man's power to execute God's will; the one caught the vision of the other, and in unflinching obedience they set their ceaseless energies to fulfill them. They both loved the Church of God with divine passion. Each knew the weaknesses of the other, and in their differences of opinion they recognized the merit of the other, thus developing a sublime friendship. How close these great leaders stood in their marvelous leadership of the twentieth century Church is revealed by this letter from Bishop Lambuth from the heart of the Belgian Congo:

“BOMBO, KASAI DISTRICT, CENTRAL AFRICA,  
Sunday, December 24, 1911.

*“My Dear Friend:* Service is over and my heart is full. I must give expression to my thoughts, and to you especially who have ever been in sympathy with this great work, and one whom I count as one of the few friends whose absolute confidence I possess and to whom I can open my heart. Have you not been praying for me day by day for years? Was it not your conviction that I should accept this office? I hesitated long, and prayed much lest a serious mistake, in my case, might be made by the Church. The voice of the Church should be the voice of God, but you know and so do I that even the Church may sometimes fail to discern the will of God.

“If God has answered your prayers in the matter of my election to the episcopacy, and in relation to the work which seems to have been cut out for me, a great responsibility has been put upon you as well as myself in the light of the developments of this year. This is true of both Brazil and Africa. Then the time is short for both of us, especially for me. I must do within the next ten years all that it will be possible for me to do in this life. Stand by me therefore in the planning and in the doing.”

Bishop Lambuth saw clearly; within ten years God called him from his labors in the Church militant to the glories of the Church triumphant. Miss Bennett was attending the International Missionary Committee at Mohonk when the message of his going reached her. The keen edge of her sense of loss is made evident by these communications to Miss Mabel Howell, Secretary of Oriental Work of the Woman's Misisionary Council:

"Your telegram just received. How fast they go! Bishop Lambuth and Bishop Hendrix have been the two with whom I have been most intimate all the years since I entered the Methodist Church. At the last General Conference when I spoke of retiring from the Council ranks dear Bishop Hendrix walked with me and pleaded: 'O, don't go until I do.' Bishop Lambuth and I were almost the same age, and we too talked of the end being near. Now neither of them will attend the next General Conference. The Church will miss him and will not soon have his like again."

To Miss Howell she wrote, October 14, 1921, a letter which reveals her realization of the Church's great loss, yet in accustomed faith she turns to God to raise up one of like mind for his great mission:

"Bishop Lambuth's death has been to many others, just what it has been to you, a great personal loss. I know you feel as if you could hardly go on with your work in the Orient without him, for no other man in all the Church knew the missionaries on the fields and the work as he did. No other member of the College of Bishops can take his place as friend, brother, and leader in those Eastern lands. I have been wondering who would succeed him another year. I hope the General Conference will elect one or more missionary Bishops who will reside on those fields. They should be men who, like Lambuth, have lived and worked in the lands where they will reside. If we are much in prayer, God will raise up some one who can and will fill the need that now so oppresses us."

The power of the transforming influence of friendship with Miss Bennett is vividly set forth in a message to her, dated July 1, 1922, from Mrs. A. A. Davies, with whom she served in the beginning of her Church leadership:

"I love you so, Miss Bennett, and I wonder if I've ever told you how much you've meant to me—far more than you've ever dreamed. The first time I ever saw you and came under your influence was at a missionary meeting in Carlisle, Ky., when I was sixteen years old, and from that time on your wonderful character has been the greatest human inspiration I've ever known, and I have honored and loved more dearly your Christ than I would ever have done perhaps without it.

"May I tell you a little secret which may reveal to you more clearly all of this? There have come to me—as to all—hours of perplexity, many times when the way was uncertain and I could not decide on the best course. Of course, always my first impulse was to seek divine guidance, and then almost unconsciously I would begin to wonder what you'd do under the same circumstances. I'd then try to visualize you in the same position, and somehow I could see more clearly the way by what I was led to believe you'd do. So, dear friend of mine, God has often used you to lead me, though you knew it not—and you've never led me astray."

Perhaps Miss Bennett wielded no deeper influence upon any young person than that which surcharges the life purpose of Miss Mabel K. Howell. As a young graduate of Cornell University she was thrown into closest fellowship with Miss Bennett. What the impress was upon her character Miss Howell describes in a letter to her, dated June, 1922:

"As I think of you in the light of these changes that will come (referring to actions of the recent General Conference) I cannot fail to see how wonderful and magnificent your leadership has been through all the years. I know that you will never know in any real way what the womanhood of the Church and the Church owes to you. It has been a spiritual leadership

of the highest order. No other leadership in the Church has been equal to yours. It has been surpassingly great. So often these days I have thought over and again of the words that you have said to me when talking closely together. How often you have encouraged me to think that somehow I could continue to carry on the work that you had started. I can never do it, but deep down in my heart there is a most earnest prayer that under God's leadership I shall be equal to the limit of my own capacity to the responsibilities that fall upon us as women in this new day. The deepest prayer of my heart is that I may not only be true to the leadership of my Heavenly Father, but true to those great fundamental principles for which you have always stood."

This story of the varying types of Miss Bennett's friendships, with their contribution to the enrichment of her life and her own lavish outflow of heart to each is not a roll call of those she called friends. There could be no roster of those she loved and honored with friendship. All over the country there are great and small who call her friend--"gentle friend who made my cause her own."

## CHAPTER XV

### GOING HOME

FOR thirty-eight years the heart cry of Belle Harris Bennett had been: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to accomplish his work." More than a third of a century the majesty and strength of her spirit drew a host of men and women to fields where she toiled, that they also might have part in the high task of building God's kingdom on the earth. This Spirit-taught sage

"Spake with God as with her friend,  
And ruled her people with twofold power,  
Of wisdom that can dare and still be meek."

But no story of her life could fail to note the shadow that fell upon her spirit in the last years of service. She saw the trend of Church leadership looking toward absorption of woman's work and the women working in a subordinate place to carry forward that which their faith, energy, and skill had established. These fears this great soldier of the Cross confided to the forces she had led these many years, but she would not let them dampen her zeal. This last message but one to the Council reveals the steadfast purpose of her leadership:

"Our hearts cry out: 'Who is sufficient for these things?' Our sufficiency is from God; and by all the mercies of the past, the glorious hope of the future, we dare not falter or fail. We must be 'steadfast, unmovable, abounding in the work of the Lord.'

"Let the future bring what it may. 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.' The field is wide, the need is great, God loves us. Let us do the work he has committed to our hands, and let us be much in prayer for wisdom and guidance."

In the spring of 1921, after the adjournment of the annual meeting of the Woman's Missionary Council, the last annual meeting she attended, Miss Bennett stopped for a visit with a friend, an old workfellow, in Washington. It was then, as she unburdened her heart to this one of whose sympathy she was ever sure, the weariness and nervousness from these long years of overwork was so apparent that the friend cried: "Quit, Miss Bennett; give it up; let some one else bear these responsibilities. The Council will have to do without you some day." Turning about she said: "Now, don't talk like that to me. I didn't put myself in the leadership of this work. God put me here, and when he wants me to give it up he will take me out." A few months later she wrote to her friend, Mrs. Kirkwood, "I would be glad to be relieved from the work of the presidency"; but her habit of waiting before God prevailed, and she trusted him to lead her out of this divine employ when she had finished the work he gave her to do. The summer came and the autumn followed, bringing no rest from the responsibility or physical strain. Work, unceasing work, as though each day's toil held the destinies of man, marked the passing of the months. Midwinter brought committee meetings of utmost importance at Kansas City and at Nashville; and though the illness which had been sapping her life for a year was apparent, she did not stop to measure her strength, but went forward in the difficult work with accustomed zeal.

The General Conference Commission on reorganization of the missionary forces of the Church convened in Nashville on February 14, 1922. Miss Bennett and Mrs. Luke G. Johnson represented the Woman's Missionary Council on this Commission, and both were present to protect the interests of the women. The story of this remarkable meeting is given by Mrs. Johnson in the following statement:

"It was Miss Bennett's consuming desire during her entire public career to lift woman from a subordinate to a coördinate place in the life of the Church. Throughout the years she skillfully and gradually secured more and more recognition for woman's talents, consecration, leadership, and administration. This was necessarily accomplished through separate woman's organizations, though in her thought it was from the beginning but a means toward coördinate and equal service and leadership for both men and women.

"An outstanding event in Miss Bennett's life took place at the time of the meeting of the General Conference Commission on the reorganization of the misison forces of the Church, February 14-16, 1922. She recognized during the discussions of this Commission that the fullness of time had arrived when the great principle for which she had so long labored, and toward which every step of her leadership had tended, was now possible of fulfilment. As in every time of expansion in life, there was pain in the process.

"Miss Bennett arrived in Nashville on the morning of the day of the meeting, too ill to be away from her home. But so great were the issues involved that she said to her fellow committee worker: 'I feared it would kill me, but I had to come.' For several hours before the meeting she suffered unspeakably in her room at the hotel. Even during the two days which followed, her suffering was so intense that she could scarcely rise from her seat to speak.

"It was evident from the beginning that a majority of the Commission thought that the Board of Missions as then constituted should be divided and the Home Mission work placed with the Board of Church Extension. While this was strongly opposed by the two women, it likely would have carried in the Commission but for the fact that the organized form of woman's work did not fit into the scheme. The Woman's Missionary Council was a united body composed of both Home and Foreign work. In the plans proposed to the Commission, there was no place for it as such, and the proposition was to separate its departments and 'attach' them to the two proposed Boards.

"This proposition led to a sharp division, and for two days the debate waxed warm while each group battled

for its ideals. The discussion invariably ended with the question: 'What shall we do with the women?' Trembling with physical pain, Miss Bennett finally rose and pleaded for a united Board with three coördinate departments. Grasping at every possible means of holding her ideal, she illustrated by the glass partitions of the room in which we were sitting in the Publishing House—three of them alongside, equal in size and value and held together by one long overhead piece of like material. Again and again she urged the creation of a Board with three coördinate Departments—the Woman's Department to be one. When the day came to a close it was evident that the men had not yielded their plan for two Boards with the woman's organization divided and 'attached.'

"Sick at heart, we returned to the hotel with scarcely a gleam of hope. To have our woman's organization 'attached' to the two proposed Boards, without any individual form or function and without any degree of administration left to the women anywhere, was a blow which shattered all hope for achieving that for which she had so long labored. The issue was unmistakably and clearly before us. Should we cease to struggle and yield? Should we demand a separate woman's board, and in so doing lose that which we had already gained in the long struggle for coöperative and unified work? Or should we seek a still larger life *inside* the general organization? With this burning issue upon us, we separated for the night.

"In the early morning while it was yet scarcely day, she called me to her room. I found that she had spent the night in prayer and meditation even though in great pain and weakness. Together we talked and prayed for hours more. In this Gethsemane there settled upon us the conviction that there could now be no wavering, that the battle for woman's place of service in the Church must be held. Together we talked it out, and from her lips there came a statement of faith and devotion to her Lord and Christ rarely paralleled. Christ and his cause were first and over all in her thought. To maintain his supremacy, woman must not fail. Out of it all there came a decision as to the course we should pursue in the Commission meeting soon to follow. That decision marked a milestone in her thinking—another goal in the constant and endless effort

toward a united Church membership, delivering its full contribution of combined force for the upbuilding of the kingdom around the world. We realized that, if this decision should find favor and be consummated, it would mean the yielding of some of the independent administration which had been the natural development of a separate woman's organization; it would mean the sacrifice of unmolested thought and action in the prosecution of the work: but—it would mean an *advance toward the goal of a fuller life in the organic heart of the Church.*

"With such a conviction, there was but one course to follow. After consultation and prayer with all the women Secretaries who could be hastily summoned to the hotel, we went to the second day's meeting of the Commission without a doubt as to the position we should take. Without delay we announced to the Commission the conclusions we had reached and the reasons therefor. This had its effect. It immediately arrested debate, and there was tacit acceptance of the position announced. Some questioned the probability of the women at large accepting the position taken by Miss Bennett and her coworker, when the Chairman, Bishop John M. Moore, said: 'Miss Bennett, it *can* be done, but it will be necessary for you to go from Conference to Conference and explain to the women why you think this is the way. They will follow your leadership.' She replied: 'Bishop, I am a sick woman and I can't do that, but I will call a meeting of all the women of the Church and will try to tell them all together.'

Upon the adjournment of the General Conference Commission Miss Bennett called a special meeting of the Woman's Missionary Council to convene in Memphis, Tenn., March 6, 1922. Between these meetings she was ill and suffering so much that she went to the hospital at Lexington, Ky., for rest and treatment. On the morning of March 4, at 8 o'clock, in great suffering and in the midst of a fearful blizzard, she and her faithful secretary left the hospital and boarded the train, traveling continuously until they reached their destination at 10 o'clock at

night. Concerning this called meeting Miss Bennett wrote Mrs. L. H. Glide:

"The women were in a state of excitement when they were notified, but eighty-two of the one hundred and three came to Memphis, and we spent a night and two days in discussing the whole matter. These were preceded by a day of fasting and prayer at the hotel where the meeting was held. Many of the women from Texas, Virginia, and other places testified that they had spent all night—indeed, all the hours of their journey—in continued prayer. In all of the twelve years that the Council has been in existence, I have known no more earnest searching after the will of God than during that day of fasting and that evening, as we sat together, communing with our Lord Jesus Christ, asking to know his will and to be guided by him, during our time together."

The day following those hours of fasting and prayer Miss Bennett called the women together to explain the cause of this *ad interim* session of the Council. Mrs. Luke G. Johnson gives the following account of the meeting:

"Even then death had fastened its relentless grasp upon Miss Bennett, and when she made the effort to explain the action of the Commission her wonted clearness and decisiveness left her. She was unable to give her reasons as to why she believed that a larger life was in the path of yielding some of the independent administrative functions of the Council in order to secure them in the larger body, the Board of Missions, which, by reason of the type of Church government we have, was the regularly accepted channel for administration in the Church as a whole. In her effort to soften the blow of vanishing administrative powers, and because she believed it would furnish a continued development of woman's gifts and loyalty, she tried to suggest a larger type of activity in which Methodist women might federate, not only for mission work, but for all lines of work which the women of the Church are now doing and may yet do. It amounted to a tragedy that she was so ill when speaking that her purpose was not made clear and that her last great public effort was not then attained."

Miss Bennett returned to Richmond from this Memphis meeting with such alarming symptoms that a physician and trained nurse were called. Her devoted niece, Mrs. Annie B. Collins, moved her from the hotel to her own beautiful home, where she was cared for with the devotion of a daughter.

Miss Bennett could not attend the Council annual meeting at San Antonio in April, the first annual meeting at which she failed to answer roll call of the Board or Council since she accepted the presidency of organized woman's work in 1896. So long had the women depended upon her great warm-hearted personality and the inspiration of her radiant faith that their distress, when they knew she would not be with them, was beyond compare. They kept her in touch with the workings of the session by telegrams at the close of each day, and when the hour of election of officers for the ensuing quadrennium approached they arose *en masse* and chose her as president even though they knew she was nearing threescore years and ten, the allotted span of life. They hoped and prayed she might recover sufficiently to take her seat at the General Conference in May to which she had been elected a delegate, but disappointment met every expectation. Miss Emily Olmstead tells how keen was Miss Bennett's regret at this frustration of her dreams:

"She told me she had to spend the waking hours of the night in prayer that she might win the victory over self. After all her years of struggle and hard work to have the women of the Church recognized in its councils she, like Moses, was not allowed to enter her Canaan. How marvelously she succeeded in winning this victory was seen by those who ministered to her; there was a peace and quietness that brought to mind the words of the prophet Isaiah: 'In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.' "

When it became known that Miss Bennett's illness was extreme and there could be no hope of her attending this General Conference of the Church, the men and women paused in the midst of pressing deliberations to send her a message and have special prayer for her restoration to health. Genuine grief marked this expression of sympathy.

Miss Olmstead gives this intimate glimpse of those first days when Miss Bennett began to question her recovery and tells of the heroic spirit with which she met the possibility of death:

"When the surgeon advised an exploratory operation to determine the exact cause of the disease which seemed to baffle them, Miss Bennett was willing. The day we left for Lexington, May 15, she was apparently more cheerful than any of us, coming in to the dinner table and chatting through the meal. She had been able to answer the mail up until that time, often dictating important letters from her sick bed; again, when she was able to be up and around her room, the nurse and I took turns in reading to her the newspapers, the Church periodicals, and other current periodicals of interest. The quiet hour was always observed, we spending sometimes several hours in Bible reading and study.

"The night before the operation her self-control was remarkable. She seemed to feel that she must be brave and cheerful for the sake of her loved ones who were so distressed. Only once, when I kissed her good night, she held to my hand and whispered: 'Daughter, I am counting on your prayers that I may do His will, and that I may be unafraid.'

"The next morning, just before being taken to the operating room, she smiled and said: 'After the operation is over, please remember to return the amethyst cross to dear Mrs. Cuninggim.' I told her I believed there would be no need to return it, for I felt that she was going to get well and wear the cross. She said nothing, and somehow I felt that she knew she would not recover from the surgical operation.

"I well recall how deeply touched she had been a

couple of months before when the beautiful amethyst cross had come to her as a gift from Mrs. Cuninggim, the wife of the President of Scarritt College. It was accompanied by a note saying that as some of the soldiers in the World War were wearing the Croix de Guerre and other medals for bravery and honor, so she felt that such a brave soldier of the Cross as Miss Bennett, who had served so long and so faithfully, should be cited for bravery; and she wanted her to accept the amethyst cross as her Croix de Guerre. Miss Bennett accepted it and had worn it always with greatest joy, but she wrote Mrs. Cuninggim that when she died it must return to the little daughter in the family, that when she grew to young womanhood she might wear the amethyst cross that had been such an unselfish thought of her mother's.

"When the operation revealed the hopelessness of Miss Bennett's condition it was not necessary for any one of us to tell her; she knew it already. One day, a few weeks after the operation in answer to my question as to how she felt, she replied 'Much better than I expected, for it isn't easy to go to sleep when I know that on awakening I shall not be able to be up and about my Lord's business; instead, I must lie patiently each day and await his call to release me.' She spoke truly. It was not easy for one to lie passive, who had given nearly every waking hour for thirty-eight years to the great work to which God had called her. But through her surrendered life, as she lay on her sick bed, God was able to make her a benediction to those who visited her room."

Miss Bennett had founded her work on love and by love created fellowship; and her thought in the last weeks of her protracted illness, for the women with whom she had labored and suffered many years, was true to this ruling passion of her life. Messages of love and hope and courage were sent from the sick chamber like this through a friend who was a privileged visitor:

"She wishes that the many loving friends, from whom she has received hundreds of letters, shall know of the wonderful blessings that have come to her through

their words. There have been many messages of love and comfort, but the message that has most often come and comforted most has been: 'I love you; and if I love you, God must love you much more.' This has helped through the days of suffering and pain. She said, also, to tell the friends that the promise upon which she is resting most constantly is the promise given by Jesus to his disciples just before he went away: 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.'

"She feels that the many prayers of her friends have been answered, for she is most wonderfully conscious of the presence of the Christ. She talks to him as though he sat beside her bed, a presence more real than that of any earthly friend."

And again she assured each one that in God's eternal purpose for the universe there would still be fellowship in service in the "many mansions" promised by the Christ. Weymouth's translation of Hebrews 1: 14 was a repeated message and among her last words: "Are not all angels spirits that serve him whom he sent out to render service for the benefit of those who before long will inherit salvation?" Grief stricken were the women in this land and in the foreign fields when they knew they would no longer follow the leading of her who was best friend and inspiration of their highest endeavors. Letters, telegrams, and cablegrams came to her from all parts of the world, telling of love and gratitude for what she had meant in the lives of those who sent them. Many devoted friends journeyed to Lexington as she lingered in the hospital, or to Richmond when she returned, to see her beloved face again and to tell the old, old story of their love and thanksgiving for the blessing of her friendship. Among the many messages was a cablegram from a mission field, signed "Friends," which read "Philippians 1: 2-6"—"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you. Al-

ways in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Miss Mabel Howell, among the last friends who were privileged to visit her, reveals her spirit in those last weeks:

"While her body was full of pain and her suffering was so very intense, her great soul seemed to me greater than it ever was. She knew she was going, and going soon, and talked as if it were a certainty. She talked to me about various phases of the work at home and especially in the Orient. She talked of people, of the new organization, but the one thing she wanted and did talk most about was the wonderful sense of God's presence. She said: 'He is so very near me. I do not feel I must pray. I want to keep my eyes open when I talk to him.' She prayed for me and asked me to pray that God's will might be done in her. She said she wanted the Council to have annually a Day of Prayer and Fasting for the preachers of the Church. She said they wanted and needed it, and she believed the women would want to do it. She was ready to go, if her Father wanted it, and seemed fully conscious that a great field of *service* lay before her in heaven. She spoke of the 'ministering saints' of Hebrews—a passage on which she had often dwelt. She believed in service of some kind after death. She said she would be laboring on with us without limitation of the suffering body."

It was granted to her devoted friend and deaconess secretary, Miss Emmie Olmstead, to be at her side when she was translated from this life into the fuller one, and it is her pen that must give to the world the closing scene in the life of this wonderful servant of God:

"O, the blessed fellowship that was ours during those last few weeks of her illness! Just at twilight each day was the time for our evening prayer together. One night, after a day of much company, she asked that we repeat in unison, the 'Now I lay me down to

sleep' of our childhood days. At another time when the strain had begun to tell on my nerves, and I sobbed through the prayer, she laid her hand gently on my bowed head, saying: 'Daughter, I never fail, day nor night, to thank God for you. Don't grieve because I am going away; when I have laid aside this nervous body, I shall be 'closer to you than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.' How naturally she talked of her home-going and of the joy when she should see her Savior face to face!

"Just two days before her death, we had our last prayer together. The pain had been unusually severe, and she was worn from the suffering. In a rather petulant tone, she said: 'O, I wish the Master would come for me; I am so tired, so tired of waiting.' When I tried to comfort her and to remind her how brave and patient she had been through the long weeks and months, she lifted her voice in prayer, and the room seemed vibrant with the Master's presence. When I closed the prayer at her request, she asked that we repeat together 1 Peter 5: 10, the verse that had been such a comfort to her at the hospital: 'And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered for a little while shall himself perfect, establish, and strengthen you . . . unto the ages of ages.'

"In the midnight hour, when the death angel hovered close, we sat by her side; and though she seemed to sleep quietly under the influence of the medicine that dadened the pain, I saw her lips move. Bending to catch the words, I heard her whisper, 'First Peter,' and I knew that the Master had come to take her unto himself."

Forty minutes past twelve, July 20, 1922, surrounded by all that devotion of family and human affection could supply, the Great *I Am* came and all unseen revealed to her the way "where soul must part from self and be but soul." Freed from the burden of the flesh, her exalted spirit found its many mansions all "bright with heavenly shine." O, the mystery of birth, of death, of life eternal!

Two days later the funeral service, at the home of her niece, Mrs. Annie Bennett Collins, in keeping with Miss

Bennett's wish, was simple and beautiful in its expression of Christian joy and faith in the "life more abundant." Death was only an episode in life to Miss Bennett, and she wanted no "sadness of farewell" when the "outworn vesture of her spirit" was returned to mother earth. Only her family, a few very intimate friends, and the official representatives of the Church organizations in which she had labored were present. The ritual of the Church was read by her friend, Dr. B. C. Horton, and her pastor, Dr. William Sadler. Hymns of her own selection, expressive of her inner experience—"O love, that will not let me go" and "Jesus, lover of my soul"—were sung, bringing to those who heard the hope of "Life that shall endless be." Dr. Telford, pastor of the Richmond Presbyterian Church, whose spiritual help comforted her waiting soul in the weeks of weary suffering, led the prayer of praise and tender thanksgiving for her life. Beautiful flowers, sent by devoted friends from all parts of the country, filled the house and carpeted the lawn about the open grave, while on the casket rested a great cross of white and pink, an offering of love from the Woman's Missionary Council.

Bishop U. V. W. Darlington read the hymn, "Now the Laborer's Task Is O'er!" as they buried her worn robe of flesh by the side of her sister, Miss Sue Bennett, whom she loved as no other. As those who loved and had toiled by her side grouped about the open grave and listened to the reading of the promise of life eternal from the Word of God, joy ineffable filled their souls. This their great-hearted leader lived, lived because He lived, and this that was called death was but

"A swift passing to a mightier sphere,  
New joys, perfected powers, the vision clear  
And all the amplitude of heaven to work  
The work she held so dear."

## CHAPTER XVI

### AFTERGLOW

THE victorious life of Belle Harris Bennett needs no encomium of man; yet the praise the angel of the Apocalypse sings for those who "put on immortality" echoes in the hearts of those who touched life with her, and they join the celestial choir as they chant: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for their works do follow with them." The extent of her influence was disclosed when the Associated Press announced that her "activities in connection with educational and missionary affairs brought her country-wide prominence." The Church press throughout the connection, with evidence of grief, acknowledged the impoverishment of the world by her going, while editorials of the secular press, wheresoever Miss Bennett had moved with local people, testified to the fulfillment of a wonderful life purpose. It is not practicable to reproduce these highly laudatory papers in this book, but the selection of certain paragraphs which differ in emphasis is permissible.

The connectional organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the *Christian Advocate*, published at Nashville, Tenn., outlined the accomplishment of her life and closed with this résumé of the qualities that made her a great leader:

"Miss Bennett was deeply spiritual, a lifelong student, a gifted platform speaker, a real statesman, and a wise, progressive, and safe leader. Hers was a busy, useful life. She rests from her labors, but the influence of her life will live on and on and on."

The *Woodford Sun*, of Versailles, Ky., published this testimonial to her strength, tenderness, and resourcefulness:

"Miss Belle H. Bennett, one of the most prominent women in Kentucky, died at her home in Richmond last Thursday morning, after a long illness, in the seventieth year of her age.

"She is survived by one brother, Waller Bennett, of Richmond. She was a sister of the late John Bennett, of Richmond, one of the State's ablest lawyers and a State Senator; of the late Dr. David Bennett, who was long a resident of Lexington and president of the old National Exchange Bank; of the late Samuel Bennett, of Lexington; and of James and William Bennett, both deceased, of Richmond.

"Although Miss Bennett came of a family of prominent and unusually able people, she was more widely known than any of them, her long and arduous work in the missionary and educational activities of the Methodist Church having made her known and admired both in this country and abroad. The list of schools which she had established or fostered, and of missionary enterprises which she had helped, constitutes one of the most illustrious records of achievement in the history of American womanhood. She was a really great woman, and it is astonishing that in one lifetime she could have done so much.

"In thinking of her life, there came to the writer's mind the picture Luke draws in the Acts of the Apostles of the death of Dorcas, a woman 'full of good works and of almsdeeds which she did,' and of how, when Peter came, 'all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.'

"And we thought that if all those who have received an education and an opportunity in life and those who have been led to the Saviour through the instrumentalities which Miss Bennett founded and fostered and toiled for and expended her fortune upon—if they had gathered at the casket which held all of her that was mortal, the whole city of Richmond could not have contained them within its limits. She was a wonderful woman and did a wonderful work, and all is well with her.

"'He giveth his beloved sleep.'"

Personal tributes from many friends and fellow workers flooded the Church and secular newspapers, repeating over

and over again the sense of individual loss and wonder over the achievements of her life. Miss Lucile Crooke, of Richmond, Ky., worked by Miss Bennett's side in her first great enterprise for the kingdom when she established the Scarritt Bible and Training School. It seems fitting that this message from her pen to the *Richmond Register* should be preserved in this life story:

"Loving reverence for the most consistent and unblemished Christian character I have ever known impels this tribute to the memory of Belle Harris Bennett. In the wee small hours of yesternight this noble Christian woman laid down a life rich in service, full of achievement, illuminated at every stage with the virtues and the praise which emanate only from a pure, lofty, unselfish character, whose foundation stone is indomitable trust and faith in God.

"The official character of Christian life work can be, will be, more adequately dealt with by those associated with her in its varied branches, its diverse departments, its tremendous responsibilities. It is more especially the personal viewpoint that inspires this tribute, though the two phases of her life are so closely interwoven as to be almost inseparable.

"A very leader of leaders, a tower of strength, she guided the hosts of Southern Methodist womanhood through the breakers to the shore, with never a hint of dominance, or pride of place, or thought of self. She received honors, she wielded powers, she performed duties, she carried responsibilities that few, even in her home town, dreamed of, because of her innate modesty that was akin to humility. With head, heart, and conscience in perfect unison, kindly, loving, generous, gentle in consideration of others, these were the qualities that made her a great and useful and well-beloved woman, whose every instinct and aspiration was service; literally dying in her armor—the armor of a valiant soldier of the Cross, a lover of her fellow men.

"Endowed by nature with an artistic temperament, she loved the beautiful in nature and in art. Gifted in intellect, she loved the best in literature, so that pictures and books lent their daily inspiration to her daily life.

"Her life was rich in love, because in every relation of life she was so fine, so unselfish, so generous, so helpful. The humble and the lowly received her sympathy, shared her fellowship, and could abundantly testify that hers was an open hand. Indeed, her stewardship was an obligation joyfully acknowledged, never for a moment evaded nor neglected. She lived nobly and conscientiously. She died in the full assurance of faith which guided her life from her youth. She died praying to be brave, to be patient, to be tender, when every hour of her life had been resplendently jeweled with these and all other Christian attributes. She died, leaving us who loved her a precious, a priceless example."

One other personal expression must find its place in these records, as it reveals the secret of Miss Bennett's easy leadership of a great group of fellow workers. The writer is Mrs. L. P. Smith, of Texas, her long-time workfellow, and the tribute appeared in the *King's Messenger*:

"Our Deborah has gone! That is the thought that comes again and again. On last Thursday, July 20, 1922, a telegram from the deaconess, Miss Emily Olmstead, who has been Miss Bennett's secretary for the past four years, said: 'Entered new life at midnight—burial Saturday.'

"We are so glad that the weeks, even months of pain and weakness, are over and she whom we love is happy and strong and well and with Jesus. We must carry on the work she loved, not just the outward form of it perhaps, but the life of it, the living principles of it. What a wonderful lover she was! She loved everybody—black, red, and yellow. Wherever she went the sorrowful and the troubled and the burdened sought her out and came to her for comfort and counsel, and she gave to all out of her great heart.

"What a wonderful leader she was! She gripped the hearts of the women of Southern Methodism and held them to high ideals. She kept the broad sympathy and clear vision of a prophetess.

"What a wonderful student she was, ever seeking wisdom and gathering from all sources inspiration and knowledge! She knew world conditions and needs and ever sought to minister to those.

"What a wonderful teacher she was! She taught our women to love God's Word and to love others, to study the conditions of city and country, and to be intelligent in the work of social service.

"What a wonderful prayer life she lived! Every question was settled through prayer. My last memory of her is one of prayer. I was in Richmond, Ky., for one more time of precious fellowship and one more look of her face. We were in a fine old Southern home, and Miss Bennett was sitting up for a short time. Josie, an old-time Negro friend, came in, and after a few minutes Miss Bennett said: 'Let us pray together.' We gathered around her chair, and as each prayed heaven was near and God's presence was manifest.

"She was the only president of the Woman's Board of Home Missions and of the Council. She has led in every crisis and through every testing time, and we leaned so heavily on her strength and wisdom. We feel so bereft and wonder upon whom her mantle will fall. We thank our Heavenly Father for her life that has blest so many. Dear friend, we follow on.

'If life be not in length of days,  
In silvered locks and furrowed brow,  
But living to the Saviour's praise,  
How few have lived so long!  
Though earth may boast one gem the less,  
May not e'en heaven the richer be?  
And myriads on thy footsteps press,  
To share thy blest eternity.'

Every auxiliary and district and Conference society in the homeland and in the foreign mission fields promptly held services in honor of this valiant leader of the Lord's hosts. Resolutions glowing with commendation of her wonderful ministry and expressions of gratitude for her life were spread on the pages of their minutes. The following tribute from the Woman's Missionary Council was sent out to the Church soon after her death:

"'Blessed are they that love his appearing.'  
"In the early morning of July 20, 1922, Miss Belle H. Bennett entered into a new and larger life, the life

everlasting, the life for which here was but the preparation. No longer the earth mists hide her from the spirit world. It hath been given to her to see Him as he is.

"In triumphant faith she passed out of life on earth into the great adventure of the hereafter. Her last message to the women who were hers in a kinship of love and service was Gladstone's beautiful prayer of consolation.

"Her service so wonderful and so far reaching during a long and useful life will abide. She will serve as a ministering spirit from a world which we have faith to believe is 'nearer now than we think.'

"Among her last words were: 'Are not all angels spirits that serve him, whom he sends out to render service for the benefit of those who before long will inherit salvation?' Hebrews 1: 14 (Weymouth).

"We shall miss her gracious, beautiful personality in the councils of the Church and in interdenominational gatherings, where she has been our representative and our leader.

"We shall miss her statesmanlike vision and her words of wisdom in conferences and committee meetings, where she for so many years gave us larger conceptions of a world task and lifted us with her ideals of world service.

"We shall miss the tokens of friendship and expressions of tenderness and sympathy in times of personal need. She was a great friend. She is a great friend. She will be our leader in a larger life, in a larger love, in a larger service. She has passed from our sight, but she will live always.

"The spirit of Christ so wonderfully reproduced in her, in us must be reproduced that we may carry on to achievement the work which her vision mapped out and her love made possible.

"We wish to express to the family our appreciation of her great life. We recognize their sacrifice in having given her for so many years to her world service. We grieve with them in the separation which must be for a time, and we rejoice with them in the larger life into which she has entered.

"We wish to express to the women in the Conferences and in the auxiliaries, and to the great body of the womanhood of the Church who loved her and who for

so many years trusted her leadership, our grief with them in our inexpressible loss. Shall not we together renew our zeal in carrying forward the work to which she gave her life and follow on with loyalty and devotion, knowing that we are following the Christ we saw embodied in her.

"For it is in Christ that the fullness of God's nature dwells embodied, and in him ye are made complete." (Col. 2:9, 10, Weymouth.)

MRS. F. F. STEPHENS,  
MRS. B. W. LIPSCOMB,  
MRS. H. R. STEELE,  
MISS ESTELLE HASKIN,  
*Committee."*

Messages of sympathy came from various denominational woman's missionary societies and boards to the Council. This communication from the oldest woman's missionary organization, the only independent missionary society in the United States, is selected for this register of the life of this woman of catholic spirit:

"OCTOBER 13, 1922.

"*To the Woman's Missionary Council:*

"At the regular meeting of the Board of Managers of the Woman's Union Missionary Society of America, on October 11, announcement was made of the death of Miss Belle H. Bennett, which has occurred since the last meeting of the Board. The following action was taken:

"The Board of Managers of the Woman's Union Missionary Society of America extends sympathy to the Woman's Missionary Council of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the loss it has sustained in the home-going of its President, Miss Belle H. Bennett. We sorrow with the women of the South, feeling that their loss and ours is irreparable. In her sympathies, service, and influence Miss Bennett was one of those rare women who belong to the whole world. She has left the Christian women of America a heritage of precious memories and of inspiration in the work of making Christ known to a needy world.

ADELE MASTERS,  
*Recording Secretary."*

Memorial services were not confined to Church or religious organizations. In clubs, unions, and associations where Miss Bennett's influence reached out in national and civic affairs, special meetings commemorative of her life and services were held. The meeting by the Boonesboro Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, in Richmond, at the home of the Regent, Mrs. M. C. Kellogg, must be recorded. The reading of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Epitaph" and the singing of the "Lost Chord" by Mrs. Paul Burnam gave tender emphasis to the going home of this long-time member. The Kentucky Society, of Evanston, Ill., was also among the social groups that held special service in her honor.

The first annual meeting of the Woman's Missionary Council after Miss Bennett's death, held at Mobile, Ala., April, 1923, will linger long in the memory of those who were present because of the beauty and tenderness of the memorial service. The triumph of nature in the exquisite flowers and luxuriant ferns and vines which graced the chancel of the church reminded her fellow workers of the triumph of life over death of the flower of yesteryear, and that she whom they honored dwelt not with yon dead, but

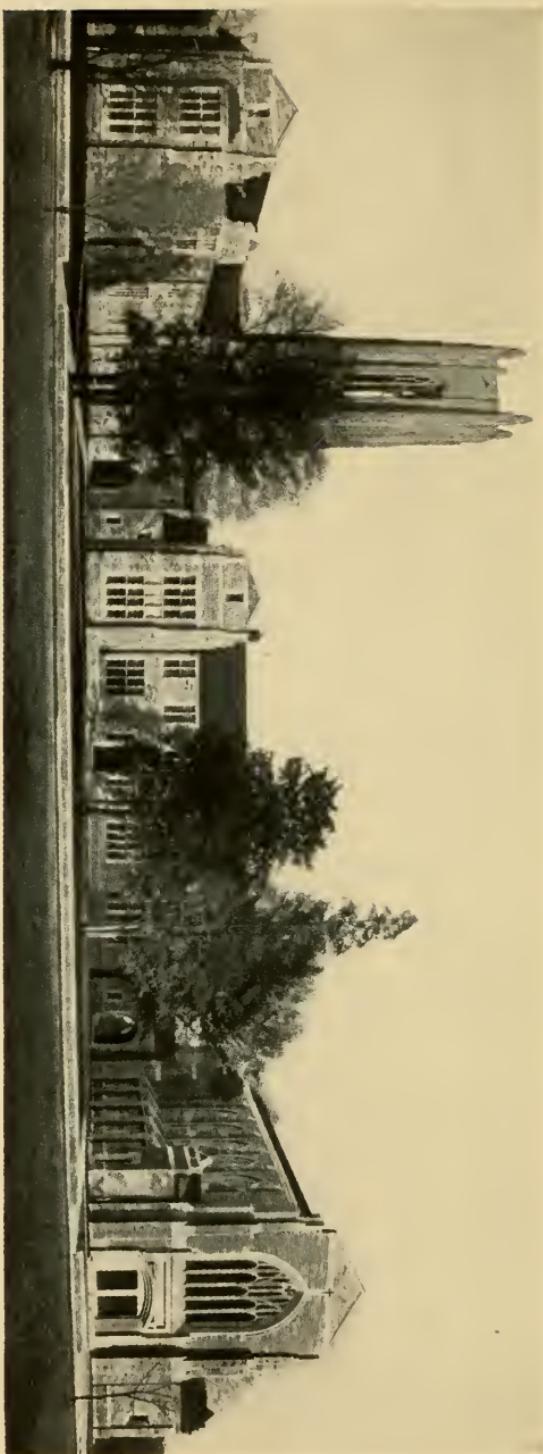
"About the immortal throne where seraphs joy,  
In growing vision and in growing love."

The Council Annual Report for 1923 contains this account of this beautiful service:

"This was a triumphant service. So near were heavenly places brought that her spirit was truly in our midst as Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon gave the Bible lesson on immortality.

"Mrs. R. W. MacDonell, her friend, paid tribute to the surrendered life whose keynote was love; Deaconess Emily Olmstead read Mrs. Emily Allen Siler's poem dedicated to Miss Bennett's life; and Miss Maria L. Gibson, her coworker, offered thanks for the beauti-





THE BELLE H. BENNETT MEMORIAL, SCARRITT COLLEGE FOR CHRISTIAN WORKERS,  
NASHVILLE, TENN.

ful life and prayed that 'from the Council there might go forth such an influence of strength and beauty that the nations of the earth may feel that we follow her and her Christ.' The service closed with the celebration of the Lord's Supper, emphasizing the reality of the impressions of the hour. Thus Miss Bennett leads on, and ere the women left the church they took up the slogan she had given them: 'By all the mercies of the past, by the glorious hope of the future, we dare not falter nor fail.'

A tender and beautiful service at this session was the presentation to the Council of an oil portrait of Miss Bennett, made possible by the earnings of "Woman and Missions," Miss Haskin's history of the organized woman's missionary work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Miss Bennett left one unfinished task, one which had absorbed her thought and prayer for more than five years. It was the reorganization and enlargement of the Scarritt Bible and Training School. The calls from the mission fields for college and university men and women involved not only deeply spiritual discernment of God's eternal truths revealed in the Bible, but inevitably more highly technical and richly cultural courses than the Training School had furnished in the past. She recognized the fact that two generations of missionary work had developed a native leadership that brought the missionaries of the twentieth century into competition in educational work with native leaders of the people they would help. Her analysis of this situation was given to the missionary women of America in this statement:

"The world has grown so close together in this last quarter of a century that the native leaders in every non-Christian nation know only too well whether our Mission Boards are giving them the best schools and church buildings, the best hospitals, and the best men and women that our Christian civilization has produced."

They are calling for the best and are indifferent to less than the best. How often have we heard Dr. Young J. Allen, the late missionary statesman, say, 'Show the Chinese people that what you have is better than what they possess, and they will be eager for it'!"

When Miss Bennett went to South America and to the Orient and looked about the home fields, she saw for herself a new world demanding missionaries prepared for the "more difficult and exacting tasks awaiting them in an awakened and tumultuous world." In the report of her visit of inspection of the woman's work in the Orient in 1917 she said:

"Our workers in every field have wrought well; but the very advance in civilization in the Oriental lands, the establishment of educational systems, the building of Bible schools and opening of new lines of commerce and industry make a like advance in all forms of missionary endeavor imperative. The preparation of our missionaries must be more thorough; specialists in many lines of work must be secured; industrial and community work must be emphasized. And through all these the great aim should be not only the spread of the gospel, but the development of strong Christian leaders among the people of each nation, for the bulk of the work in each country must be done by the people themselves."

This woman of faith, born in workfellowship with the Divine, recognized the voice of God in these world challenges, saying: "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Again, in obedience she had said, as when God called her to establish the Scarritt Bible and Training School: "Yes, Lord, I will do it." Miss Gibson also caught the vision of a larger Scarritt and resigned from the presidency lest her long service and advancing years "might hinder a forward movement." A new president was chosen for the school, whose large experience in missionary movements and power of organization prepared him to build

upon the sacred past. Miss Bennett's close study of the subject showed her that a missionary training school should be located near a teachers' college for correlation with classical and economic courses. She saw that Scarritt should become sufficiently technical to be recharted as a college empowered to confer graduate degrees. On December 13, 1921, seven months before her death, she wrote Mrs. Glide concerning her plans for a larger Scarritt:

"I have had two weeks of hard and constant committee work, except on the Sabbath days, in Nashville. My first two days were with a group of eight, two from the Board of Education, two from the Board of Missions, two from the Sunday School Board, and two from the Council. Dr. Cuninggim, the President of our Scarritt College of Missions, asked for this meeting. For two days and a part of one night we gave our best thought and mental strength to continuous consideration of how the Church from the preacher down could best be trained to do the work God had called it to do. We all recognized the fact that our preaching force was not what it should be; the theological seminaries give a theoretical training, not so much in the Word of God, as in certain great lines of thought. Beginning with the preachers, we went down through every line of paid workers of the Church and tried to see if we could map out plans and courses through which all of those who wanted fellowship with Christ in service might get it. Dr. Cuninggim, who was the first secretary in charge of the correspondence courses for the preachers in the Church, had brought in splendid material, and I believe we have made the beginning of a very great advance movement for the Church."

Thus far she had worked for the reorganization of this great institution when her hands were stayed by death. At the first meeting of the Council after her going home the women of the Church determined to finish the task by moving Scarritt Bible and Training School from Kansas City and relocating it where affiliation with a great university was possible according to her last expressed desire. By unani-

mous consent they proposed to build a great Belle H. Bennett Memorial on the new campus and provide for the endowment of the Bennett Biblical Department of the School. Five hundred thousand dollars was placed as the minimum amount for the erection of these monuments to perpetuate the name of her whose wise leadership Southern Methodist women had gladly followed. In less than three years the women and children poured six hundred and thirty-nine thousand five hundred and eighty-four dollars (\$639,584) into the treasury as love gifts in memory of her who loved and toiled and prayed for them. Never before has there been so large a gift for any institution in the woman's work of the Church.

In 1923 the old Scarritt, hallowed by sacred memories and vast service, was moved to Nashville, Tenn., and chartered as "The Scarritt College for Christian Workers," with authority to confer graduate degrees. Its location near Peabody Teachers' College makes possible the large preparation the modern missionary must have for greatest usefulness. It also meets the demand for training leaders of religious education for the home Church. This new Scarritt College for Christian Workers stands as the full fruition of Miss Bennett's first vision of a prepared leadership for a world's conquest. It stands the "lengthened shadow" of her own being.

Within five years after God moved her from service among men the beautiful Belle H. Bennett Memorial was completed. Built of gray limestone, semi-Gothic in architecture, with a great tower rising high above, it suggests the great religious structures of the Old World. Every hour the chimes in the tower ring out the great old hymns of the Church. In its beauty and noble form this memorial will tell the story through the years of her whose light so shone that men seeing her good works glorified the Father. Here men and women who have heard the call divine will learn

the secret of her power and follow as she did God's divine law of life through death that others may live. Like her they will have power by self-renunciation and victory by surrender to God's will.

Thus radiates the afterglow of this great life. Her name

“Shall kindle many a heart to equal flame.  
The fire she lighted shall live on and on,  
Till all the darkness of the lands be gone,  
And all the kingdoms of the earth be won,  
  And one—  
A soul so fiery sweet can never die,  
But lives and loves and works through all eternity.”







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